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"Worthy" Households but "Unworthy" Invitees?: The Matthean Uses of " ἄξιος

John K. Ridgway, S.J.

Abstract

This essay summarizes uses of ἄξιος in non-biblical and biblical literature and analyzes Matthew's usages of ἄξιος. These uses apply to (a) impersonal "fruit" that correlates with repentance (3:8); (b) faithful "workers" worthy of their food (10:10); and (c) persons' faithful/honourable behaviours of hearing and accepting Jesus' apostles and their kingdom preaching, accepting the apostles' other ministries, and loving Jesus supremely and following him (10:11, 13, 37–39; 22:8). The essay advances scholarship on Matthew's uses of ἄξιος in three original ways: it provides *exegetical foundations* for meaning(s) of ἄξιος in its contexts; it establishes coherences between worthiness–unworthiness, honour–shame, and hospitality–inhospitality; and it demonstrates synthetic relationships between occurrences of ἄξιος in Matthew.

Through the centuries, Christian traditions have admonished believers to be "worthy" followers of Jesus and "worthy" of the kingdom and eternal life. "Worthiness" is not a secondary Christian accretion; it flows directly from the NT where it is a qualification instated by Jesus. "Worthy" is expressed in Greek by ἄξιος that appears nine times in Matthew, eight in Luke's Gospel (seven in Acts), and once in John; Mark does not use ἄξιος.¹ This essay analyzes the First Gospel's uses of ἄξιος with focus on the theological contexts in which the word occurs. The analysis is important because it aids in

1. For (a) abbreviated, ancillary work on 3:8; 10:37–38; (b) short treatment of 22:8; and (c) extended, earlier exegeses of 10:9–15—on separate topics of healing and peace, see John K. Ridgway, *"Let Your Peace Come Upon It": Healing and Peace in Matthew 10:1–15* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), esp. 211–301. This article has a new focus with substantially ongoing and vastly revised developments of earlier ideas in the book.

answering three largely neglected questions: (1) What are some instances of ἄξιος in Greco-Roman and biblical texts that may have helped shape the concept world in which Matthew wrote; and what light, if any, do these uses shed on ἄξιος in this Gospel? (2) What are the denotations of ἄξιος in Matthew; what traits/behaviours make subjects ἄξιος or not; and of what or whom are subjects ἄξιος or not? (3) Does ἄξιος in one passage illumine its meaning(s) in others?

I. State of the Matter

While scholars recognize that being "worthy" is significant in Matthew, a literature sample reveals that in a majority of studies there is a deficiency of contextually precise and lexically-exegetically generated analyses of ἄξιος. For instance, without exegeting ἄξιος in Matt 3:8, W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison assert that it means "corresponding to" or "befitting" repentance. Likewise, for 10:11 these authors simply state that ἄξιος denotes readiness to welcome the disciples; and without giving reasons, the authors concur with Robert Gundry that "worthy" applies to places that have satisfactorily accepted the kingdom's announcement. Davies and Allison do not specify meanings for ἄξιος elsewhere in Matthew. While acknowledging that ἄξιος is a "key word," Ulrich Luz virtually passes over it in 3:8; 10:10–11; without directly exegeting the term, Luz implies/asserts that in 10:11–13 ἄξιος means favourably receiving Jesus' disciples. Luz does not directly address ἄξιος exegetically in 10:37–39; he merely states that relative to 10:11–13 and 22:8, the adjective in 10:37 applies to decisions at the last judgment about accepting or rejecting Jesus. Luz undertakes lengthy analyses of 10:38–39, and he concludes that disciples become worthy of Jesus by enduring the cross and by suffering for Jesus as judgment approaches.² Often, the precise denotation(s) of ἄξιος in specific

2. Johannes P. Louw, Eugene A. Nida, Rondal B. Smith, et al., eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (2d ed.; 2 vols.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1988–1989), 1:vii. For literature samples, see Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988–1997), 1:305; 2:175 and

texts is/are not treated.³ Some scholars offer a fuller discussion. For example, Craig S. Keener holds that persons are ἄξιος in 10:10–13, 37–38 when they offer supreme loyalty to Jesus and hospitably receive his disciples. In 22:8, being ἄξιος pertains to clients' honouring their patrons and, specifically, respecting the prestige and kindness of the king who invites guests to a marriage feast. In the same context, Keener contends that "worthy" involves reacting

Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 188, also 47, 187–201; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1989–2001), 1:165–72; 2:70–71, 76–82, 112–18 (Luz's commentary does not cover Matthew 21–28); Corina Combet-Galland, "Du champ des moissonneurs au chant des serviteurs: Matthieu 9,35–11,1," *Foi et Vie* 81 (Cahiers Bibliques 21; 1982): 35; Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 27–28 (3:8); Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Matthäusevangelium* (2 vols.; Kommentar zum Neuen Testament mit der Einheitsübersetzung 1; Würzburg: Echter, 1985–1987), 1:97; 2:208–11; Joachim Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (2 vols.; HTKNT 1; Freiburg: Herder, 1986–1988), 1:367–69; Benedict T. Viviano, "The Gospel according to Matthew," in *NJBC*, 637, 665; Ivor H. Jones, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London: Epworth, 1994), 18 (3:8), 66 (10:11); Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Matthew 1-13: New Testament 1A* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 196–97 (10:10).

3. E.g., John L. McKenzie, "The Gospel according to Matthew," in *JBC*, 68, 80–82, 100; Plummer, *Matthew*, 27–29, 149–51, 156–57, 300–303; Theodor Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 1; reprint, Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1984), 399–401; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:305–7; 2:171–77, 220–223; 3:202; Donald Senior, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 116–18, 155–56; Thomas G. Long, *Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 24–31, 119–22, 246–48; William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (2 vols.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 1:54–58, 423–26, 457–59; 2:309–16; Howard Clarke, *The Gospel of Matthew and Its Readers: A Historical Introduction to the First Gospel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 26–40, 106–15.

positively to God and Jesus so as to be "chosen" (22:14).⁴ This essay advances and makes original contributions to scholarship on ἄξιος in Matthew in several chief ways. First, it distinctively gives extended *exegeses/bases* specifically for the meaning(s) of ἄξιος in all its contexts. Second, it augments existing work in social-science analyses and other commentaries by exegetically establishing fresh, explicit coherences between worthiness–unworthiness, honour–shame, and hospitality–inhospitality. Third, it innovatively shows synthetic relationships between instances of ἄξιος in Matthew.

II. A Lexical and Literature Survey of ἄξιος

As is further treated below, it is important to point out that since ancient Israelites and first-century C.E. Mediterraneans were *group-based* people, being "worthy" (or not) was not a private matter but a publicly assessed valuation about persons' worth and repute. In early Greek, non-biblical writings chief denotations of ἄξιος relative to persons and/or things include: worthy (ethically or otherwise), estimable; of good/identical value or price, cheap; worth (a certain value); counterbalancing; due, fit; deserved/deserving (of); of people: persons of equal status; sufficient for; authorized to act.⁵

ἄξιος occurs, for example, relative to eminent achievements (Diodorus Siculus *Bib. hist.* 4.11.1), a shout worthy of/fit for favor (Josephus *Vita* 250), a city worthy/deserving of respect (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 39.1), or deeds deserving/befitting death (Josephus *A.J.* 11.144). Persons are ἄξιος in relation to: "admiration" (*Let. Aris.* 282), confidence (Josephus *A.J.* 4.179), freedom (Josephus *B.J.* 5.408), honour (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 31.93; cf. Lucian *Tox.* 3), punishment (*B.J.* 5.408), or suspicion (Plutarch *Cat. Ma.* 21.4). Dionysius of Halicarnassus says persons are ἄξιος to give reliable

4. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 119–23, 320, 330–31, 519–23; cf. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew* (2 vols.; WBC 33A/33B; Dallas: Word, 1993–1995), 1:272, 292–93.

5. E.g., LSJ, 171.

reports (*Ant. Rom.* 1.22.5). Herodotus indicates that rainfall is not ἄξιος of account (4.28). The *Letter of Aristeas* expresses that it is ἄξιος to inform Philocrates of political events (4).

Similar uses appear in the LXX and deuterocanonical texts. LXX denotations for ἄξιος include: worthy (of), deserving (e.g., ethically); good (of humans or otherwise); just (e.g., monetarily); deserved, due, proper; adequate; compared with.⁶ Job 11:6 says a person is worthy/deserving of guilt (or: "just recompense"). People are ἄξιος (or not) of: beatings (*Deut* 25:2), God (*Wis* 3:5), old age (*2 Macc* 6:27), honourable memory (*2 Macc* 7:20; cf. *Sir* 26:15), military victory (*2 Macc* 15:21), death (*4 Macc* 4:12), or a just/full price (*1 Chr* 21:22, 24). Proverbs 8:11 declares, "For wisdom is better than jewels, and every precious thing cannot compare with [ἄξιον] her" (cf. 3:15; *Esth* 7:4; *Wis* 6:16). Used impersonally, in *4 Macc* 17:2–18:5 in adulation of the mother of seven sons, 17:8 states: "Indeed it would be proper [ἄξιον] to inscribe upon their tomb these words as a reminder to the people of our nation" (cf. *Philo Leg.* 1.22.70).

In the NT ἄξιος appears forty-one times. For relations between *things*, the adjective can signify: corresponding or comparable (to), of elevated comparable value; worthy, appropriate; of identical value/price; deserving, or not; befitting/befits; meet(s) for; in keeping with; as evidence of. For *persons* ἄξιος can denote: worthy, fit/fitting, proper; deserving, deserve(s); sufficiently good; possessing elevated distinction or worth; comparable (value); consonant with expectations; conforming to standards.⁷ ἄξιος also describes relations between one's deeds and punishment or death (e.g., *Luke* 12:48; 23:15, 41; *Acts* 23:29; 25:25; 26:31). The adjective expresses, for instance, that a centurion is ἄξιος to have Jesus heal his slave (*Luke* 7:4), masters are ἄξιος of honour by slaves (*1 Tim* 6:1), or undefiled Christians are ἄξιος of Christ (*Rev* 3:4). In *Rev* 4:8–11 the four heavenly creatures offer God praise with an acclamation in v. 11,

6. J. Lust, E. Eynikel, and K. Hauspie, comps., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (vol. 1; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1992), 43.

7. E.g., BAGD, 78; Louw, Nida, Smith, et al., *Lexicon*, 1:622, 628.

“Worthy [ἄξιος] art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, . . .” (cf. Rev 5:2, 4, 9, 12).⁸ Ἀξιός can signal lack of worthiness. As the “prodigal son” (Luke 15:11–32) realizes his wrong, he returns to his father and confesses, “I am no longer worthy/fit [ἄξιος] to be called your son” (v. 19 RSV; cf. v. 21; John 1:27; Acts 13:25, 46).⁹ *Impersonally* ἄξιος can mean: fitting, worth, worthwhile, advisable, proper, meet.¹⁰ In 1 Cor 16:1–4 as the Jerusalem collection becomes ready for delivery, Paul states he will send it to Jerusalem via envoys, adding: “If it seems fitting [ἄξιον] that I should go also, they will accompany me” (v. 4; cf. 2 Thess 1:3).

Senses of ἄξιος, some of which overlap, are summarized in this Table. Denotations in boldface type can be particularly interdependent with characteristics of *honour*, which is discussed below.

PERSONS (& GOD)	THINGS/NONHUMAN ENTITIES	IMPERSONAL STATEMENTS
ASSESSMENTS ABOUT ETHICAL OR GROUP VALUE, OR UTILITY	ASSESSMENTS ABOUT GENERIC DEGREES OF INHERENT VALUE AND/OR UTILITY	INDICATING THAT AN ACTION OR THING IS SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE OR UTILE
worthy (of); estimable; fit (for)/fitting; due; good/ sufficiently good; just; deserve(s)/ deserving (of, or not); proper, adequate; authorized to act;	worthy (of), of estimable value, worthwhile, adequate, proper, good, sufficient for/of, due, fit (for), befitting/befits, deserved/ deserving of (or not), meet(s) for, appropriate, in keeping	fitting, worth, worthwhile, proper, good, just, appropriate, advisable, meet, adequate

8. See W.C. van Unnik, “‘Worthy is the Lamb’: The Background of Apoc 5,” in *Mélanges bibliques en hommage au R. P. Béda Rigaux* (ed. Albert Descamps and Anré de Halleux; Gembloux: Duculot, 1970), 445–61.

9. For John 1:27 some MSS have ἱκανός (fit, competent, worthy): 66 75 pc; cf. Matt 3:11.

10. See, in part, BAGD, 78.

possessing elevated/ notable distinction or worth/repute; adhering to norms—expectations	with, as evidence of, eminent	
PARTICULARLY OF TRAITS OR ACTIONS <i>COMPARED WITH</i> THOSE OF OTHERS	PERTAINING MOST SPECIFICALLY TO ECONOMIC VALUE	
compared with, comparable to	of good/identical value or price, worth (a certain value), cheap, just (monetarily), adequate, sufficient for/of, appropriate	
RELATIVE TO SOCIAL HIERARCHY	CHIEFLY OF WORTH— UTILITY WHEN <i>COMPARED WITH</i> OTHER THINGS	
sharing the same status as another or others (this also relates to "honour" challenges— ripostes)	compared with, comparable to, being of elevated comparable value, appropriate, counterbalancing, corresponding (to)	
RELATIVE TO PERFORMANCE ON A MEASURABLE (E.G., ECONOMIC) SCALE	"OF WORTH" ESPECIALLY WHEN CORRESPONDING TO A MEASURABLE SCALE	
corresponding to public standards, e.g., that prescribe expected remuneration for a person's labours	corresponding with	

III. "ΑΞΙΟΣ in the Gospel of Matthew

"ΑΞΙΟΣ occurs nine times in the First Gospel: at 3:8; 10:10, 11, 13 (twice), 37 (twice), 38; 22:8. This essay's aim is to examine these occurrences that reflect both diversity from and consonance with each other; these uses apply to (a) impersonal fruit/deeds relative to repentance (3:8); (b) faithful "workers" (10:10); and (c) persons' faithful behaviours of hearing and accepting Jesus' apostles/emissaries and their preaching God's kingdom, accepting the apostles' other ministries, and loving Jesus supremely and following him or being so ready (10:11, 13, 37–39; 22:8).

As will receive fuller development below, it is important here to examine two values often operative in first-century C.E. Mediterranean culture: honour and shame.¹¹ One reason is that there are NT correlations between worthiness (ἄξιος)—unworthiness and honour–shame (e.g., Heb 3:3; Rev 4:11; 5:12). The positive, public worth that people had in their judgments and in the appraisals of the *group(s)* to which people belonged constituted *honour* (//worthiness). Two criteria for honour were family affiliation and hospitality. Conversely, *shame*—conceived negatively (//unworthiness)—resulted when persons violated group norms of social behaviour and expectations, bore a reproachful public assessment, and/or were judged transgressors of ethical standards. A group's honour embedded in the leader or master (e.g., God, Jesus, *paterfamilias*, or

11. Some data on honour–shame in this and the next paragraph are culled from Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," in *Honor and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (ed. J. G. Peristiany; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), esp. 19–39; idem, *The Fate of Shechem or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (3d ed.; rev. and expanded; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 27–80, 104–5; Halvor Moxnes, "Honor and Shame," *BTB* 23 (1993): 167–76; Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998).

king) who merited unqualified obedience. The honour of a group's leader bore upon the honour of family members or other associated persons (e.g., children, servants, or disciples) so that a provocation against the latter's honour was a challenge to the leader. Challenges required some type of retort by recipients so as to regain or preserve honour.

Since Mediterraneans were group-based, their world views, public worth (*ἄξιος*), and life norms were functions of their group(s). People could belong to *natural groups* and/or *chosen ones*. Persons were in natural groups independent of choice, e.g., by family origin, domicile, or ethnicity. People selected their chosen groups; religious or craft networks, legal arrangements, or other volitional affiliations generated such groupings. The apostles called by Jesus (as in Matt 10:1–15) formed a chosen group. In natural and chosen groups, honour could be *ascribed* or *earned–procured*. In either case, *interactions among persons* governed honour—and not, as is often predominant in the modern world, *economic power, success, and product manufacture/accumulation*. Ascribed honour arose not from persons' achievements but from public judgments about persons' worth (worthiness—*ἄξιος*) based, for example, on valuations of (worthy) family origins (as in Matt 10:37–39 below). People judged to have socially recognized prerogative, power, and/or eminent worth could *ascribe* honour–worthiness to others. By contrast, honour (*ἄξιος*) was often *earned–procured* (or lost) by engaging in gambits of challenge and riposte that included variegated transactions from public greetings to physical attacks (Matt 22:6–7). Normally such challenges and ripostes were interchanges between persons not affiliated by kinship or intimate acquaintance. A “challenge”—a social “joust” involving acquisition or diminution/loss of honour—had two chief components. First, by issuing a challenge, the challenger inserted oneself into a foreign public arena whose “territorial” boundary lines of status and power belonged to the recipient. In prosecuting a challenge, the perpetrator ventured some type of physical and/or verbal conduct toward another person(s), the recipient(s), who usually was considered socially equivalent with the result that each joust had to assess whether the one regarded the other as socially equal and *worthy*—thereby adding to or exchanging honour—or as inferior—thereby undermining the honour–worthiness (*ἄξιος*) of one or both jousters. Second, and relatedly, having

received a challenge, the recipient(s) had to ascertain (a) whether and how the challenge cohered with customary mores; (b) whether the challenge escalated or affronted the recipient’s honour and worth/worthiness—i.e., one’s distinction, status, and socially evaluated repute; and (c) if and how to respond. A recipient would judge a challenge “favourable” or “unfavourable” depending on whether the person construed it as (a) augmenting honour (//worthiness) and being reciprocally propitious or (b) devaluing honour and attempting to usurp the recipient’s status and worth(iness). A response constituted any reciprocation by the recipient, and every reciprocation entailed public valuations—taking into account the perceived social ranks of each jousting—about whether the reciprocation amplified or reduced the honour–worth of the challenger and/or recipient. An array of tactics could comprise a response: e.g., an assent to the challenge and challenger(s); a counter-challenge that perpetuated the dynamics of challenge–riposte; a defiant backlash that rebuffed and disgraced the challenger; or withholding any response, which connoted public dishonour for the recipient. While persons related by kinship instinctively evaluated each other as enacting “insider” honourable relations among each other, such was not the case for those “outside” a family. Until they publicly evinced the contrary, “outsiders” were “without honour” (unworthy) and were appraised as suspect or antagonistic so that interplays between “insiders–outsiders” involved scrutinizing one another to ascertain each one’s motives, actions, and potential threats to insiders’ honour–worth/worthiness.

A. Matthew 3:8

ποιήσατε οὖν καρπὸν ἄξιον τῆς μετανοίας.

Bear fruit worthy of repentance.

The account of John the Baptist prophesying in the Judean desert appears in Matt 3:1–12.¹² In 3:2 John mandates, “Repent

12. In exegeting Matt 3:8, I consulted, in part, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke* (2 vols.; AB 28/28A; Garden City: Doubleday,

[μετανοεῖτε], for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This verse echoes Jesus’ charge in 4:17, “Repent [μετανοεῖτε], for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (cf. 10:7). Μετανοέω in 3:2; 4:17 denotes “repent, be converted, change one’s mind”; μετάνοια in 3:8 means “repentance, change of mind, conversion.”¹³ Repentance in the NT entails initiating a fresh relation with God, involving not simply a change of mind but a reconstitution of one’s inner dispositions and exterior behaviours. In 3:7 John preaches to some Pharisees and Sadducees whose need for repentance is manifest by John’s branding them “You brood of vipers!”—a metaphor for their iniquitous, dishonourable state (cf. Gen 49:17; Job 20:12–16; Isa 59:5; Matt 12:34; 23:33) because they (a) overvalue their lineage with their father Abraham (3:9) relative to God and Jesus and (b) consider themselves impervious to the coming divine wrath (3:7–12). In Matthew, some Pharisees are often portrayed disapprovingly: e.g., for deficient righteousness (5:20; 23:23–39), aversion to Jesus (9:34; 12:14, 24; 22:15), hypocrisy (23:1–39), and obstruction of entrance to the kingdom (23:13). Impending doom forms the backdrop for John’s imploring the Pharisees and Sadducees to repent, “Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? . . . Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (3:7b, 10). John enjoins his hearers in 3:8, “Bear fruit [καρπὸν] worthy [ἄξιον] of repentance [μετανοίας]” (cf. Acts 26:20).¹⁴ Καρπός can signify: fruit, work, deed, result. The primacy of bearing (good) fruit is underscored by nineteen references to καρπός in Matthew: 3:8, 10; 7:16–20 (seven times); 12:33 (three times); 13:8, 26; 21:19, 34 (twice), 41, 43. An idiom for honourable behaviours/deeds and for evincing that one has repented is “bearing

1981–1985), 1:464–65, 468; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:304–7; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:50; Keener, *Matthew*, 119–31; Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 97–98; Clarke, *Matthew*, 26–40.

13. BAGD, 511–12.

14. Luke’s parallel in 3:8 reads, “Bear fruits worthy of/that befit repentance” (καρπούς ἄξιους τῆς μετανοίας); the variant καρπὸν ἄξιον is attested by D W pc e r¹ sy^h.

good fruit” (cf. Matt 3:10 par. Luke 3:9; Matt 7:16–20; John 15:2–16; Gal 5:22–23; Eph 5:9; Phil 1:11). In 3:8 καρπὸν ἄξιον τῆς μετανοίας (“fruit worthy of repentance”) denotes fruit/deeds, e.g., that are worthy of, befit, meet for, are in keeping with, or are evidence of repentance. Bearing such fruit signifies that true repentance entails inner conversion and moral behaviours. To repent in 3:2 parallels producing “fruit worthy of repentance” in 3:8. Matthew 3:2, 7–12 affirm that ἄξιον in v. 8 appears in a theological context since 3:2, 7–12 attest that to yield καρπὸν ἄξιον τῆς μετανοίας is essential for receiving God’s kingdom and for evading ruin.

B. Matthew 10:9–10

⁹ Do not acquire [Μὴ κτήσησθε] gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, ^{10 a} no bag for the journey, ^b nor two tunics, ^c nor sandals, ^d nor a staff; ^e for the worker is worthy [ἄξιος] of his food.

The precepts in 10:9–10 are part of the mission discourse in 10:1–15 where Jesus commissions the Twelve to sustain his work of preaching the kingdom (v. 7), healing, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, and exorcising—all as “free” ministries (v. 8; see these acts of Jesus in, e.g., 4:23–24; 5:1–9:35).¹⁵ Matthew’s ardor to ensure that the venality of spurious prophets and missionaries who amass fortune and accouterments from their activities eludes true disciples—based on the imperative Μὴ κτήσησθε (“Do not acquire”) at the beginning of v. 9—attests itself in vv. 8b–10. A foundation for the interdicts in vv. 9–10d (recall 10:8b) is the γάρ adage of 10e: ἄξιος γὰρ ὁ ἐργάτης τῆς τροφῆς αὐτοῦ (“for the worker is worthy of his food”; par. Q/Luke 10:7). Γάρ is a causal conjunction introducing the bases for

15. In exegeting Matt 10:9–10, I consulted Floyd V. Filson, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1960), 130; M. Eugene Boring, *Sayings of the Risen Jesus: Christian Prophecy in the Synoptic Tradition* (SNTSMS 46; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 45–47; Plummer, *Matthew*, 148–51; Gundry, *Matthew*, 186–88; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:171–74; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:269–74; Keener, *Matthew*, 317–19; Carter, *Matthew*, 235; Clarke, *Matthew*, 106–9.

the preceding journey regulations and for the disciples’ being worthy.¹⁶ A reason (γάρ) for the apostles’ self-restraint is that God, via hospitable–receptive hosts, will supply the envoys’ τροφή (food, nourishment; v. 10e; cf. 10:19–20; 1 Cor 9:14–18; 2 Cor 11:7–15; 1 Thess 2:9) of which they are worthy.¹⁷ Matthew’s use of τροφής clarifies that accepting gratis food and lodging from hospitality is permissible and honourable (10:11–14) but garnering income or similar resources (μισθός) is not.¹⁸ Compared with its other uses in the First Gospel, ἄξιός in 10:10e occurs in a lesser theological context by signaling that an economic precept of *honour* decrees a worker warrants food based on what should be expected given that person’s labours.¹⁹ Though in 10:10e ἄξιός does not mean being “worthy” of the kingdom or “worthy” of being Jesus’ disciple, one can infer that the disciples’ faith in God by avoiding material gain can lead them to be worthy of Jesus and the kingdom, as per worthiness in 10:11, 13, 37–38.

C. Matthew 10:11

And into whichever city or village you enter, find out who is worthy [ἄξιός] in it and stay there until you depart.

16. BAGD, 151; Richard A. Edwards, “Narrative Implications of *Gar* in Matthew,” *CBQ* 52 (1990): 636–39, 652–55. See also BAGD, κτάομαι 1 (455).

17. BAGD, τροφή 1 (827).

18. BAGD, μισθός (523). Some manuscripts for Matt 10:10e record μισθοῦ: K 565 892 *al* it syr^h mg. See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:174; Gundry, *Matthew*, 187; Ernest James Bursey, “Exorcism in Matthew” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1992), 163–64; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:272; Carter, *Matthew*, 235.

19. A. E. Harvey, “‘The Workman Is Worthy of His Hire’: Fortunes of a Proverb in the Early Church,” *NovT* 24 (1982): 211; Louw, Nida, Smith, et al., *Lexicon*, 1:622 n. 4; Long, *Matthew*, 117–18.

The transition from mandates about pecuniary gain and mission resources in 10:9–10 to instructions about the emissaries’ comportment in a city or village occurs in Matt 10:11.²⁰ Ἄξιός in 10:11 points to “worthy” houses in 10:13. In the charge ἐξετάσατε τίς ἐν αὐτῇ ἄξιός ἐστιν (“find out who is worthy in it”) in 10:11, ἐξετάζω denotes: scrutinize, investigate, analyze, explore meticulously for someone/something.²¹ This verb’s potency is patent by the exigency with which Matthew—unlike Mark, Q, and Luke—insists that when the apostles arrive in a locale they must find who (τίς) is ἄξιός.²² In 10:11, 13, Matthew does not specify how the apostles determine who is worthy, or not. Ἐξετάζω in v. 11 implies that once they reach a city or village—and/or when they approach or enter a house (vv. 12–13)—the disciples explore meticulously for persons, socially prominent or not, who meet the Matthean social standards/norms for worthiness and honour. It is conceivable that some people who first appear worthy—or are presumed to be—end up unworthy since they fall short of Matthew’s worthiness norms, found in 10:1–8, 14–15. In 10:1–6, Jesus commissions his apostles for their mission. While in 10:7 Jesus charges them to preach the kingdom, 10:8 concretizes the charge by empowering the apostles to extend Jesus’ labours of healing, raising, cleansing, and exorcising. Relatedly, 10:14–15 warn that failure to accept the emissaries and their preaching (“hear your words,” v. 14) results in dishonourable repudiation and eschatological ruin (v. 15). Based on 10:1–8, 14–15 one can conclude that ἄξιός in v. 11 (and v. 13) signifies behaving

20. In exegeting Matt 10:11, I consulted, in part, Bennie R. Crockett, “The Missionary Experience of the Matthean Community: A Redactional Analysis of Matthew 10” (Th.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986), 55–59; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:174–75; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:272; Neyrey, *Honor*; Carter, *Matthew*, 235.

21. LSJ, 592; BAGD, 275.

22. Mark 6:10 says only that when the missionaries arrive in a home, they should remain there until they depart (cf. Q 10:5–8; Luke 9:4; 10:7). There are no norms in Mark, Q, or Luke for selecting any particular house.

faithfully and hospitably/honourably—”bearing worthy fruit/deeds” (καρπός) as in 3:8—by (1) accepting the apostles and their kingdom proclamation (from v. 7); (2) accepting the envoys’ attendant services (from v. 8); and, inferably, (3) following Jesus or being thus willing (vv. 1–6). Such behaviours/deeds comprise public norms/expectations about fidelity and acceptance toward: God and Jesus, Jesus’ and his envoys’ ministries, the kingdom, and thus social standards of *honour*.

D. Matthew 10:12–13

¹² And as you enter into the house, greet it. ¹³ ^a And if the house is worthy [ἀξία], ^b let your peace come upon it; ^c but if [it] is not worthy [ἀξία], ^d let your peace return to you.

Matthew completes in 10:8b–11 sojourn and residence standards. Next come the charges to salute a “worthy” house (10:12, from 10:11) and confer peace on it (10:13).²³ Mark 6:10 and Q 10:5–6 (cf. Luke 10:5–6; Luke 9 has no parallel to Matt 10:12–13) likely include traditions, that Matthew edited, behind Matt 10:12–13. In 10:13a Matthew has καὶ ἐὰν μὲν ᾗ ἡ οἰκία ἀξία (“And if the house is worthy”) instead of καὶ ἐὰν ἐκεῖ ᾗ υἱὸς εἰρήνης (“And if a son of peace is there”; Q 10:6a). The earliest instance of οἰκία in Matthew 10 is at 10:12. *In the context of Matt 10:11–14* οἰκία means (a) a physical edifice and (b) a household, family unit, and/or those dwelling with each other.²⁴ Following from τίς (“who” = a person) in v. 11, it is *people* in v. 13 who make up an οἰκία ἀξία that is “worthy” of peace. Matthew 10:13–14 also accent people: an οἰκία that is “not worthy” (dishonourable) consists of householders refusing to accept or hear the envoys: “And whoever [ὃς ἂν] does not receive you or hear your words, as you are going out from that house [οἰκίας]

23. In exegeting Matt 10:12–15, I consulted, in part, Filson, *Matthew*, 130; Crockett, “Missionary,” 59–66; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:175–79; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:269–70, 272–74; Long, *Matthew*, 118–19; Neyrey, *Honor*; Keener, *Matthew*, 320–21; Carter, *Matthew*, 235–36.

24. BAGD, 557; Louw, Nida, Smith, et al., *Lexicon*, οἰκία, κτλ.; οἶκος, κτλ.; γένεσις, κτλ. (1:81, 111–13, 115, 558, 560).

or city, shake off the dust from your feet” (10:14). Every house the missionaries visit obtains a peace salutation in Q/Luke 10:5, “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace [be] to this house!’” Stricter selectivity exists in the First Gospel: only a “worthy” house acquires peace (v. 13); an “unworthy” one forfeits it. Given the calamity in 10:14–15 of eschatological ruin that Matthew associates with not being worthy, granting peace to “worthy” houses can be reckoned as exceeding mundane practices.²⁵ Matthew 10:13 highlights the bestowal of peace via symmetrical constructions. Clauses 13a and 13c contain ἄξια in two antipodal-symmetrical protases: καὶ ἂν μὲν ᾗ ἡ οἰκία ἄξια (“And if the house is worthy,” 13a) and ἂν δὲ μὴ ᾗ ἄξια (“but if [it] is not worthy,” 13c).²⁶ If the protasis in v. 13a appertains, the apodosis in v. 13b tells the disciples: ἐλθάτω ἡ εἰρήνη ὑμῶν ἐπ’ αὐτήν (“let your peace come upon it”). But if the proviso in v. 13c applies, the apodosis in v. 13d prescribes a *retort*: ἡ εἰρήνη ὑμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐπιστραφήτω (“let your peace return to you”).

The disciples’ sojourning in a house (10:11–12) and conferring peace (10:13) on it depend on its “worthiness.” Ἀξιος in v. 11 described worthy, honourable *persons*. In 10:13 ἄξιος denotes “worthy” householders who hospitably/honourably receive and accept the disciples and their ministries (vv. 7–8). The *direct mention of receiving* (δέχομαι = receive, accept, welcome) the envoys in 10:14 verifies that this is a correct reading of ἄξιος: “And whoever [ὅς ἂν] does not receive [δέξεται] you or hear your words, as you are going out from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet.” Ὅς ἂν (“whoever”) means house members from 10:11–13. Receiving and accepting God, Jesus, the kingdom/gospel, their emissaries—an emissary’s reward, and/or someone in Jesus’ name are the *sole* semantic contents of δέχομαι in Matthew: 10:14, 40–41 (six times); 11:14; and 18:5 (twice). Commonplace articles or persons are never objects of this verb. The tenor of δέχομαι in 10:14 parallels ἄξιος in 10:11, 13: both words apply to social norms/expectations of behaving

25. E.g., Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:176; Carter, *Matthew*, 235.

26. Gundry, *Matthew*, 189; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:176–77.

faithfully and honourably by (1) embracing the apostles; (2) accepting their labours; and, inferably, (3) becoming Jesus' followers. In Matt 10:40 to receive/accept (δέχομαι) the apostles is to receive/accept (δέχομαι) Jesus and God: "The one who receives [δεχόμενος] you receives [δέχεται] me, and the one who receives [δεχόμενος] me receives [δέχεται] the one who sent me" (cf. Q/Luke 10:16; John 13:20). Such behaviours parallel "worthy fruit" from 3:8 since they are moral deeds of accepting Jesus' apostles and their commissioned "deeds" that illustrate the Baptist's and Jesus' message that persons should repent because the kingdom is imminent (3:2; 4:17; cf. 10:7). The claims for ἄξιος in 10:11, 13 can include the view of George Wesley Buchanan. Based on a Jewish mission portrayed in Matt 10:1–6, Buchanan holds that relative to Jewish hospitality in 10:10–11, 13, readiness to welcome the apostles or demonstration of worthiness of Jesus was not the sole ground for being ἄξιος; "worthy" also and specially depicted orthodox Jews strictly complying with diet and purity statutes. Buchanan's assertion may have merit; however, given the *Matthean text of 10:10–15, 40* it is difficult to conclude that Buchanan's legal signification is the *dominant* one, on two counts: (a) no such legal predication is explicitly present in 10:1–15 (also, see Jesus' and the apostles' associations with gentiles, e.g., in Matt 4:12–17; 8:5–13; 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30; Luke 2:32; 7:1–10; Acts 10:1–11:18) and (b) the unequivocalness of Matt 10:14–15, 40 cogently suggests that being worthy directly entails *receiving/accepting*—δέχομαι in 10:14, 40—the disciples and their message/labours.²⁷

When repulsed by those not ἄξιος—inhabitable and dishonourable—the envoys *retort* in 10:14 by leaving the locale and brushing its dust from their feet, a sign of abjuration (cf. Acts 13:51; 18:6). Brushing off dust portends perdition in Matt 10:15 for the "unworthy": "Truly, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on [the] day of judgment than for that city."

27. Buchanan, *The Gospel of Matthew* (vol. 1, books 1–2; Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1996), 1:446; also 1:134–37, 427–49; 2:843–52.

When arriving in a locale (Matt 10:11–12) to which they may not belong by dint, for instance, of (a) kinship, shared domicile, or social status or (b) other social affiliations, the “outsider” apostles insert themselves into a foreign public arena.²⁸ Thereby, the apostles issue a “challenge” to local residents. The recipients must decide (i) whether and how the challenge coheres with their customary norms, (ii) whether the challenge escalates or affronts their honour and worthiness, and (iii) how to respond. If a recipient judges the challenge as allotting honour, the person can reciprocate in ways that render honour–worthiness (ἄξιος) to the challenger and recipient. If the challenge is regarded as dishonourable, the recipient retorts, for example, by spurning the challenge or by withholding any reaction—which would connote public dishonour. Unless the residents (a) are already favourably inclined toward the apostles’ message s or (b) are Christians, the emissaries are assumed to be “without honour” and are publicly appraised as suspect or antagonistic so that interplays between the “insider” locals and the “outsider” apostles involve circumspect scrutinizing as the locals try to ascertain the apostles’ motives, actions, and potential threats to the honour–worthiness of the “insiders.” Each “joust” enacting challenges and responses rates the social standing—involving honour and worthiness—of the other(s) to decide whether the challenge–response augments or diminishes each joust’s honour and worth(iness). This scenario applies to the apostles whom Jesus commissions in Matt 10:1–15 to carry on his mission among residents of various locales. However, this scenario may need some revision given that several scholars argue that ἄξιος in Matt 10:11 points to the feasibility that at least in some locales/houses, Jesus’ gospel had antecedently been preached (a) where Christian approbation had already been granted to the kingdom’s proclamation and/or (b) where the apostles’ labours transpire among worthy disciples.²⁹ In such cases, the apostles would not receive as negative evaluations as is normal for “outsiders.” Indeed, the apostles could be judged as having equal or higher social

28. Malina, *New Testament*, 32–36, 44–45.

29. See Gundry, *Matthew*, 188; Crockett, “Missionary,” 58; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:175.

standing than some recipients of their challenges/ministries. Jesus' apostles could be esteemed as possessing relatively heightened honour/worth/repute—qualities that reflect being worthy and honourable—due to the envoys being commissioned by and labouring as *agents* for Jesus, and God (Matt 10:40), who are likely recognized by at least some or many recipients as figures of noteworthy or supreme honour and worthiness (see Rev 4:8–11). Hence, amid a matrix of honour valuations, various "actors" performing challenge–riposte judge each others' public honour–worth relative to (a) the propriety and success, or not, of challenges and responses and (b) resultant acquisitions or losses of honour–worthiness (ἄξιος). In each locale in which Jesus' apostles minister, these social-status and worthiness-honour valuations undoubtedly influence the residents' decisions about whether worthily/honourably/hospitably to accept the emissaries or not. *Within the world view of worthiness–unworthiness and honour–shame and according to the context of Matt 10:1–15*, by accepting the challenges initiated by Jesus' agents and their ministries the residents would procure worthiness (ἄξιος) and honour; but by rebuffing the agents or by withholding a response, the residents would stigmatize themselves as not ἄξιος and as dishonourable (10:14–15).

Honour–shame also interpenetrate with *hospitality–inhospitality*.³⁰ To accommodate an "outsider" within one's social location reflects hospitality. Biblically, hospitality exhibits covenant holiness (Lev 19:33–34) and honour; for example, Abraham is honoured and "worthy" to receive the Lord hospitably (Gen 18:1–21) and inhabit the kingdom (Matt 8:11). Jesus accepts hospitality across social lines (e.g., Matt 9:9–10; 26:17–30; Luke 7:36). Luke 14:7–11 discusses hospitality and honour at a marriage feast (cf. Phil 2:29). When Jesus accepts hospitality in the house of Simon the leper, and a woman anoints Jesus' *head* (a distinctive locus of honour; Matt 26:6–13),

30. John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (OBT 17; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Bruce Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 87; Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 279–80; Malina, *New Testament*, 38–41.

Jesus honours her and declares her worthy of memory, "Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her" (v. 13). Conversely, Jesus speaks of the dishonour of everlasting suffering in Hades resulting from a rich man's inhospitality toward the indigent Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). When persons are ἄξιος by (a) possessing publicly recognized distinction or worth and (b) complying with socially proper norms and expectations applying to God, Jesus, Jesus' kingdom preaching and other ministries, Jesus' apostles and their labours, faith, and discipleship, then persons are also publicly judged to have honour. Thus, in view of: biblical traditions about honour, hospitality, and worthiness; Jesus' practices of honouring and accepting hospitality; and recognition that hospitality accords with social norms, the interrelation of honour, hospitality, and worthiness is apparent. In Matt 10:11–13 by entering and labouring in a locale, the apostles challenge the residents to accept or reject God's and Jesus' agents whom Jesus commissions (10:1–14). Matthew 10:14–15, 40 supply the keys to what constitutes a proper rejoinder to or result of (καρπός) the challenge. A worthy/honourable/hospitable rejoinder, consonant with social mores about being both ἄξιος and honourable, is to accept the apostles and their ministries—thereby, for instance, obtaining God's gift of peace; an unworthy/dishonourable/inhospitable riposte of rejection results in the shame-imbued calamities mentioned in 10:14–15. Bruce Malina holds that in the NT there existed a hierarchy with God and Jesus as supreme figures, followed beneath by agents of God and by archangels, inferior nonhuman beings (e.g., spirits or demons), humans, and then sub-human characters.³¹ Jesus avows in Matt 10:40 that whoever receives his apostles, receives him; and receiving him means receiving his sender (God). Accordingly, as per Matt 10:14–15, 40 one can argue that the apostles' worthiness–honour embed in the worthiness–honour of God and Jesus so that to accept hospitably the apostles and their ministries procures worthiness–honour for the acceptors but unworthiness–dishonour for the rejecters. In Matt 25:35, 42–46, Jesus likewise assigns eternal punishment for the unrighteous who fail to welcome him hospitably but eternal life for the righteous who are

31. Malina, *New Testament*, 32–33, 104–5.

welcoming. Similar attributions of worthiness–honour for loving and following Jesus appear in Matt 10:37–39.

E. Matthew 10:37–39

³⁷ The one who loves [φιλῶν] father or mother more than me is not worthy [ἄξιος] of me; and the one who loves [φιλῶν] son or daughter more than me is not worthy [ἄξιος] of me;³²
³⁸ and whoever does not take his/her cross and follow [ἀκολουθεῖ] me is not worthy [ἄξιος] of me. ³⁹ The one who finds his/her life [ψυχὴν] will lose it, and the one who loses his/her life [ψυχὴν] for my sake will find [εὕρήσει] it.

Matthew 10:34–39 describe how the gospel's demands produce domestic schisms (cf. Mic 7:6), as the pericope opens in 10:34 with Jesus' dictum that he comes to the earth with a sword, not peace (par. Luke 12:51; *Gos. Thom.* 16).³³ Matthew 10:37 is likely a variation of Q 12:52–53; 14:26.³⁴ Two chief questions inhere in Matt 10:37–39: (1) How do persons become worthy of Jesus? and (2) What does being "worthy of Jesus" mean? The answer to the first query has two interpenetrating components. First, in 10:37 *Jesus declares* that ἄξιος applies *exclusively to him*. The aim of 10:37 is to stress the need to love Jesus unsurpassably to be worthy of him. If family

32. Manuscripts B* D et al. omit, "and the one who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" likely because of homoeoteleuton. The clause was penned at the end of the column by the earliest copyist of B when the copyist saw the error (*TCGNT*, 28).

33. In treating Matt 10:37–39, I consulted, in part, Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:220–24; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:290–93; Crockett, "Missionary," 155–63; Carolyn Osiek, "The Family in Early Christianity: 'Family Values' Revisited," *CBQ* 58 (1996): 1–24; Neyrey, *Honor*; Keener, *Matthew*, 329–31; Carter, *Matthew*, 243–44.

34. The parallel logia in Luke 12:52–53; 14:26–27 lack any ἄξιος expression. A logion in *Gos. Thom.* 55 has an analogous saying of Jesus: "and whoever does not hate brothers and sisters, and carry the cross as I do, will not be worthy of me"; cf. John 12:26.

relations hinder discipleship, they must be severed; otherwise persons are not worthy of Jesus.³⁵ Though φιλέω (love or show affection, e.g., by affiliation) occurs five times in Matthew (6:5; 10:37 [twice]; 23:6; 26:48), it conveys love for *Jesus* solely in 10:37.³⁶ Jesus’ single sentence in 10:37–38 evinces that deeds (καρπός) of loving (φιλῶν) him supremely (v. 37) and taking one’s cross to follow (ἀκολουθεῖ) him (v. 38) would make one worthy. There is dual evidence in 10:37–38 that being a loving, faithful disciple would render a person worthy/befitting of Jesus. Most directly, in Matthew ἀκολουθέω (“follow,” v. 38)—which associates with φιλέω/ἄξιος in v. 37 and with ἄξιος in v. 38—regularly connotes following Jesus *as a disciple*: e.g., in 4:20–22; 8:10, 19–23; 16:24; 20:34; 27:55–56.³⁷ Discipleship assertions pervade Matthew 10: e.g., vv. 5–33, 40–42. Fracturing natural family ties—thereby likely incurring familial dishonour (Exod 20:12; Deut 21:18–21; Matt 15:4)—for the sake of an unencumbered love for Jesus make one worthy–honourable toward him by engaging in expected norms of faithful discipleship within a new, fictive “family” of Jesus by taking the dishonour-laden “cross” and following Jesus worthily.³⁸

The second component, linked with the first, of the answer to the question about how persons become worthy of Jesus occurs in 10:38–39. After implying in 10:38 that to take one’s cross and follow Jesus *make one worthy of him*, Jesus in 10:39—continuing the thought line

35. Employing ἄξιος with a genitive of a person (“is not worthy [ἄξιος] of me”) denotes “does not deserve to belong to me” or possibly “is not suited to me”—BAGD, 2a (78).

36. Louw, Nida, Smith, et al., *Lexicon*, 1:293.

37. Luke 14:26 reads, “If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”

38. Some honour data here are based on Neyrey, *Honor*, 175, also 15–16, 21–22, 28, 52–55, 58, 79, 91–94, 113–14, 173–79, 186; Moxnes, “Honor and Shame.”

from 10:38—declares, “The one who finds his/her life will lose it, and the one who loses his/her life for my sake will find it.” “Taking one’s cross” likely signifies utmost commitment and self-surrender by which actually or symbolically one is willing to endure suffering, family loss, and death for Jesus, discipleship, and the gospel (cf. Matt 10:16–25; 16:21–26 par.; 26:36–46; 27:27–50). For “losing one’s life [ψυχή] for Jesus’ sake” in v. 39, it is sufficient to epitomize that ψυχή probably means a person’s physical life and the soul’s spiritual life.³⁹ Forfeiting life for love of Jesus can refer to physical sacrifice and/or death, to martyrdom (cf., e.g., Matt 2:13; 10:21–22; 12:14; 20:23; 27:20; Rev 12:11), and/or to selfless following of Jesus by submission to God in emulation of Jesus (cf. Matt 6:10; 7:21; 12:50; 26:39, 42). In 10:39b, “losing one’s life” means finding, gaining (εὐρίσκω) it—on earth and in the *eschaton* as eternal life (cf. Luke 12:16–21; John 12:25).⁴⁰ Jesus clearly implies in 10:38–39 that one is worthy/befitting of him by (a) “taking one’s cross” and following him in discipleship and (b) “losing one’s life” for him. Many texts commend martyrs as “worthy” (using forms of ἄξιος) and, inferably, honourable: Rev 5:12; Wis 3:5; 2 Macc 6:27; 4 Macc 18:3. John 12:26 links following (ἀκολουθεῖτω) Jesus with divine honour. Senses of ἄξιος in 10:37–39 reflect “worthy fruit” (3:8) since they include expected, *honourable* norms of loving-following Jesus faithfully relative to the kingdom: “that you may be made worthy [καταξιωθῆναι] of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering” (2 Thess 1:5).

The second chief question for Matt 10:37–39 is what does being “worthy of Jesus” mean? In 19:23–24 as Jesus affirms the difficulty for the rich to arrive in the kingdom, the apostles ask Jesus in v. 25 about who can attain salvation. In the spirit of 10:37–39 Peter inquires in 19:27, “Lo, we have left everything and followed [ἠκολουθήσαμεν] you. What then shall we have?” Given this fact, the apostles’ stated alacrity to follow Jesus to their own deaths (Matt

39. BAGD, 893–94.

40. BAGD, εὐρίσκω 3 (325); Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:224; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:293.

26:35), and Jesus’ prediction in light of Peter’s threefold declaration of his love for Jesus that Peter will undergo a violent death as Jesus’ follower (ἀκολουθεῖ, v. 19) in John 21:15–19, it is reasonable to assume that the apostles basically love Jesus in ways that make them “worthy” of him in fulfillment of the criteria in Matt 10:37–39. There is evidence in the Gospel that being worthy of Jesus means that his followers are eligible for or will receive, e.g., heavenly bounties (5:12; 6:6, 18; 7:11), forgiveness (6:12, 14; 26:28), authority to partake in judging and ruling the eschatological people of Israel in the kingdom (16:19; 19:28), divine sonship (5:45; cf. 12:49–50), eternal life and salvation (10:32–33, 39; 19:29; 26:29), the Spirit’s inspiration (10:20), and Jesus’ abiding presence (18:20; 28:20). In summary, in 10:37–39 Jesus affirms that loving him absolutely and following him radically are expected norms for worthy and honourable believers called to live faithfully in accord with the kingdom’s claims and with Jesus’ teachings, deeds, and example.

F. Matthew 22:8

Then he said to his servants, “The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy [οὐκ ἦσαν ἄξιοι].”

The saying in 22:8 is part of the Parable of the Marriage Feast, which has triple attestation: Matt 22:1–14; Luke 14:15–24; *Gos. Thom.* 64.⁴¹ Matthew 22:1–10 likely constituted the earliest parable; the Wedding Garment story (22:11–13) was presumably secondary, along with the later aphorism in 22:14. The clause about “not being ἄξιος” in 22:8 is probably redactional.

41. In treating 22:1–14, I consulted Filson, *Matthew*, 232–34; J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1970), 126–55; Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (2d rev. ed.; reprint, New York: Scribner, 1972), 63–70, 176–90; John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 70–73; Plummer, *Matthew*, 300–303; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:205–6; 2:624–32; Neyrey, *Honor*; Keener, *Matthew*, 517–23; Carter, *Matthew*, 432–37; Barclay, *Matthew*, 2:313–16.

The story begins in 22:2 by comparing the kingdom to a king who has a marriage feast for his son, at which time a king may exhibit signs of honour. Analogies between the eschatological kingdom and wedding banquets are common in the NT: e.g., Matt 9:15; 25:1–13; Mark 2:19–20; Luke 5:34–35; 14:7–14; John 2:1–11; Rev 19:7–9. Though there is no unanimity about allegorizing the parable, many scholars do so: the “king” could symbolize God, and the “son” Jesus (cf. Matt 21:33–46). The first servants sent (22:3) could allude to OT prophets. In 22:3a, the servants summon the “invited,” possibly signifying the Jewish leaders and/or the entire Jewish people. But these invitees do not come (v. 3b; also vv. 5–6). Their repeated disinclinations recall the Israelites’ obstinate rejections of God’s OT calls; in 22:4 the king dispatches a second set of servants—who for Matthew could symbolize John the Baptist, Jesus, and Jesus’ envoys—all of whom are shamed and killed in 22:6 (cf. Matt 10:16–31; 14:3–12 par.; 21:33–36 par.; 26:47–27:50 par.; Josephus *A.J.* 9.265).⁴² These servants proclaim that the feast is prepared (22:4), a sign of the end time’s imminence (cf., e.g., Matt 3:1–2; 10:7; 12:28; 25:1–13).⁴³ A note of preparedness reechoes in v. 8: “The wedding is ready, . . .” Given the comparison of the kingdom–feast and the credible allegorizing of the king’s son (v. 2) with Jesus, the banquet’s readiness in v. 8—in Matthew—can indicate that by Jesus’ earthly ministry and death the kingdom drew near (cf. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7, 23; 12:28) and is ready to receive those ἄξιός of it. The misfortune in v. 8 is that the original invitees “were not worthy” (οὐκ ἦσαν ἄξιοι). So in v. 9 the king charges his servants to comb the highways and hospitably beckon everyone they meet. They went “and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests” (v. 10). This situation symbolizes the final, inclusive influx into the kingdom: even outsiders (perhaps unbelievers and/or

42. Jeremias, *Parables*, 67–69; Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:630; Buchanan, *Matthew*, 2:848–52; Barclay, *Matthew*, 2:310–11.

43. Jeremias, *Parables*, 64; Viviano, “Matthew,” 665; Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:630.

the hapless in Palestine; cf. Rom 11:7–32) are encompassed.⁴⁴ This scenario envisions an ethos that contrasts with norms about honour and shame whereby social unequals probably would not share meals with each other; such practices spurred divisiveness even among Christians (e.g., Matt 11:19; 1 Cor 11:17–22). Partaking meals with social inferiors posed particular problems for members higher on the social ladder whose kinship groups could disavow them for such dishonourable behaviour, especially where social boundaries were narrow and unyielding.⁴⁵

Accents on repentance (3:2, 8), righteousness (5:20), and worthiness relative to the kingdom appear in 22:11–13 in the story of the Wedding Garment, which can signify repentance and its attendant “worthy fruit/deeds” (καρπός). Numerous scholars hold that keys to understanding the symbol of the Wedding Garment lie in various OT and NT texts. Given the likelihood that Matthew was a Jewish-Christian, the evangelist indubitably drew on Jewish Scriptures. One focal text is Isa 61:10 in which God attires the beloved with “the garments of salvation” and “the robe of righteousness,” as at a wedding. *1 Enoch* 62:3, 13–16 state that on the judgment day, the “righteous and elect ones shall be saved” and shall wear “the garments of glory” and “the garments of life from the Lord.” The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–24) combines repentance of the younger son (vv. 18–19, 21, 24), a festal robe (v. 22), and ἄξιός (vv. 19, 21). Revelation 3:4, 5, 18 describe faithful, honourable (v. 18) Christians with unsoiled garments who will walk with the Lord “in white, for they are worthy [ἄξιοί]” (v. 4). Revelation 19:8 declares that the Lamb’s Bride is “clothed with fine linen” which is “the righteous deeds of the saints.” The OT ties fasting with repentance (e.g., 1 Sam 7:6–11; Neh 9:1–3; Joel 1:13–14; Jonah 3:5–9) while Matt 9:14–17 associate notions of fasting/repentance, a wedding feast, and unshrunk (new) cloth that belongs on a new garment (par. Mark 2:18–22; Luke 5:33–39). The OT relates fasting/repentance and righteousness (e.g.,

44. Gundry, *Matthew*, 438; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1056–57; Carter, *Matthew*, 436–37.

45. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Commentary*, 135.

Isa 58:2–9).⁴⁶ Matthew's linking the kingdom and righteousness is paramount: "But seek first his [God's] kingdom and his righteousness" (6:33).

Matthew 22:14, however, indicates that not all invited to the feast-kingdom gain access (cf. 3:10; 7:13–14; 13:1–30, 36–43; 19:24; 25:31–46), for "many are called, but few are chosen [ἐκλεκτοί]." Forms of ἐκλεκτοί (chosen, elect) occur four times in Matthew: at 22:14; 24:22, 24, 31. In 24:22, 24, 31, "chosen" could mean steadfast Christians, Jew and gentile. The same sense applies in 22:14 where ἐκλεκτοί could connote ἄξιος Christians who are responsive and faithful to Jesus and his ministry, as in 10:11–13.⁴⁷ Those failing to repent and gain proper righteousness are banished (22:13), as in 10:11–15 where those not worthy/dishonourable are condemned.

We can now further analyze ἄξιος in Matt 22:1–14. By ignoring the king's hospitality—and by seizing, mistreating, and killing his servants—the unrepentant invitees dishonour the king (and his son) in whom the son's and servants' honour embeds. Such transgressions—i.e., "bad fruits"—render the invitees "not worthy" (22:8) and dishonourable by violating social expectations regarding royal invitations and patron-client norms. Richard Bauckham argues that because the presence of the initial invitees at the king's feast for his son would manifest the invitees' honour toward the king and fealty to the royal heir, the operative issue is political duty. No invitee could be exonerated for dismissing the invitations, and any dismissal would

46. Many of this paragraph's data up to this note are adapted from Jeremias, *Parables*, 187–90; cf. Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:631; Senior, *Matthew*, 155; Carter, *Matthew*, 436.

47. BAGD, ἐκλεκτός (242); Gundry, *Matthew*, 440–42; Viviano, "Matthew," 665; Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:632, 703; Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 196–97.

be equivalent to a revolt—an action unavoidably rendering the invitees unworthy—dishonourable.⁴⁸

Verses 1–10 imply that being worthy would mean honouring the king’s hospitality by attending the feast and not maltreating his servants; declining the banquet and abusing the servants make the original invitees unworthy—dishonourable (vv. 3–8). Attributions of worthiness—unworthiness are not so straightforward, however, since the scenario in vv. 11–14 complicates the matter; this scenario does not fit the *parable’s literary unit of vv. 1–10* since the person who comes to the feast, without having assailed the servants, but who lacks a wedding garb is hurled “into the outer darkness” where people “will weep and gnash their teeth” (v. 13). This language expresses exclusion from the kingdom and ruin for the unrighteous who fail to “bear fruit worthy of repentance” (3:8; cf. 5:20)—e.g., metaphorically unbelievers, Jew and/or gentile (cf. Matt 8:12; 13:41–42, 49–50; 24:50–51; 25:30). Since v. 2 links kingdom and feast, being unworthy of the feast means being unfit for the kingdom (cf. 3:10; 10:13c–15, 39). Verses 12–13 infer that the guest without suitable attire is *not* ἄξιος. Though this invitee attends the feast, this guest is unworthy and dishonourable by failing to don a proper garment—allegorically to repent and produce good fruit/deeds.⁴⁹ Verse 14 reinforces this idea: “For many are called, but few are chosen [ἐκλεκτοί]” iterates that not all who accept the invitations are worthy. Symbolically, worthiness applies only to ἐκλεκτοί—righteous (5:20) Christians, Jew and gentile—who meet social expectations (honour) by responding to God, Jesus, and their envoys (as in Matthew 10) so to enter the kingdom.

48. Bauckham, “The Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1–14) and the Parable of the Lame Man and the Blind Man (*Apocryphon of Ezekiel*),” *JBL* 115 (1996): 483–84; also Malina, *New Testament*, 46; Derrett, *Law*, 140, 154; Keener, *Matthew*, 517–23; Carter, *Matthew*, 432–37.

49. The idea of dishonour/shame here is from Neyrey, *Honor*, 31.

IV. Conclusions

Here the essay proposes answers to the innovative questions posed at the outset. The first set asks about ὄξιος in Greco-Roman and biblical literature that may have helped shape Matthew's concept world. Among its nine usages in Matthew, ὄξιος is predicated once of a nonhuman item ("fruit" in 3:8) and eight times of persons: a worker in 10:10; a host/household members in 10:11, 13 (twice); persons relative to Jesus in 10:37–38 (three times); and invitees in 22:8. In both groups of literature, ὄξιος applies to such traits, circumstances, or beings as: respect, honour, confidence, guilt, punishment, death, humans, and/or God. The second and third questions at the beginning of this essay ask about (2) the denotations of ὄξιος in Matthew, the traits and/or behaviours that make subjects ὄξιος or not, and the objects of ὄξιος; and (3) whether ὄξιος in one text helps illumine its denotation(s) in others. As we saw, occurrences of ὄξιος in 3:8; 10:11, 13, 37–39; and 22:8 cohere theologically, to a considerable degree. These data offer support that the eminence Matthew attributes to ὄξιος exhibits itself by the trenchant predications about worthiness, or its lack.⁵⁰ The relation between the uses of ὄξιος can be summarized thus:

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 3:8 | "bear fruit worthy of, befitting, meet for, in keeping with, as evidence of repentance " + " Repent , for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (3:2; 4:17) |
| | ⇕ |
| (10:7 | "The kingdom of heaven is at hand") |
| | ⇕ |
| 10:10 | " worthy "—based on an economic honour principle that a worker/ emissary warrants expected sustenance deriving from the person's labours |
| | ⇕ |

50. Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1952 [2d edition, 1971] by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

- 10:11, 13 “**worthy**” by performing deeds of (a) hospitably accepting Jesus’ apostles/**emissaries**, their **kingdom** preaching, and other ministries; and (b) **following Jesus faithfully**, or being willing to—paralleling “bearing **fruit worthy of repentance**”
⇕
- 10:37–39 “**worthy**” of Jesus by deeds of loving him supremely and “taking one’s cross” to **follow Jesus faithfully**—reflecting “bearing **worthy fruit**”
⇕
- 22:8 being “**worthy**” by deeds of (a) responding **faithfully** to God, Jesus, and their **emissaries** and (b) “bearing good **fruit**” befitting **repentance** so as to be chosen for the **kingdom**

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Scriptural Reasoning – the Dynamic that Informed Paul's Theologizing

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Paul's theologizing is entrenched with Scriptural language and quotations. It is the argument of this article that this obviously close relation of Paul's writings and Israel's Scriptures has to be seen as being on a deeper level than a mere use of Scriptures as proof texts for his gospel. Paul's theologizing is entirely rooted in the symbolic universe of Israel's Scriptures. This implies that his form of arguing is basically shaped and informed by Scriptures rather than primarily by forms of Western logic and rationality. It is a form of Scriptural reasoning which negotiates meaning in a communal and dialogic process being in interaction with fellow Christ believers as well as non Christ believing fellow Jews. Paul is thus perceived not as a more or less coherent thinker of Western logic and its dualisms but as one who is creatively playing with the multiple rhythms of Scriptures related to life in the light of the Christ-event. This could contribute to an understanding of Christian identity beyond the restrictions of dualistic thinking as well as to the recognition of the close link between theological thinking and the practice of faith in everyday life.

1 Introduction – Paul and Scripture

That there is an inherent relation between Paul's writings and the Scriptures of Israel is a recent scholarly recognition following on from earlier insights.¹ Most of these recent studies concentrate on Paul's 'use' of the Old Testament/the Scriptures and its relevance for explaining and defending his 'doctrine' of faith. The Scriptures for Paul are perceived merely as a 'witness to the gospel' or theological proof texts for his doctrine.² Significantly, along with such an

¹ Already in earlier centuries this has been an issue of scholarly research as e.g. Emil Kautzsch, *De Veteris Testamenti loci a Paulo Apostolo allegatis*. Leipzig: Metzger und Wittig 1869; Hans Vollmer, *Die alttestamentlichen Zitate bei Paulus*. Freiburg: Mohr 1895; Otto Michel, *Paulus und seine Bibel*. Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann 1929; E. Earl Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd 1957.

² Cf. Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums: Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1986.

emphasis on Paul's 'use' of the Scriptures goes a denial of any significance of the Scriptures for Paul's guidance of his communities in matters of practical life and ethical conduct.³ Such an approach implies a certain duplicity, in fact a split mentality in Paul's 'use' and appreciation of Scripture – there are the more spiritual parts which refer to the prophetic promises, whereas other parts deal merely with the material aspects of life, and ethical conduct.⁴

Whilst some of the more recent studies concentrate predominantly on the explicit citations of Scripture by Paul, such as Christopher Stanley in his *Paul and the Language of Scripture*⁵, others find *Echoes of Scripture* (R. B. Hays)⁶, or structures of specific parts of Scriptures as the underlying pattern of one particular letter or sections of it.⁷ Despite the divergence of these studies, they seem to share to some extent a perception of the relation of Paul and the Scriptures which stresses the *and* in this phrase in a way that puts some distance between the two entities, Paul and the Scriptures, rather than combining them. Though emphasizing the importance of the Scriptures for Paul, the relationship is described as one between two separate entities – there is Paul and the gospel he is proclaiming on the one side and there are the Scriptures of Israel on the other. The Scriptures are seen as providing the language, providing support, providing proof texts for Paul's 'Christian' arguments in his letters. Paul is seen as 'using' the Scriptures as a sort of quarry to serve his own purpose.

³ On this see Brian Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7*. Leiden: Brill 1994, pp.3-13.

⁴ Cf. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics*, p.5

⁵ Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992.

⁶ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1989.

⁷ E.g. Shiu-Lun Shum, *Paul's Use of Isaiah in Romans: A Comparative Study of Paul's Letter to the Romans and the Sibylline and Qumran Sectarian Texts*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 2002

Though emphases such as those on the thorough analysis of the citation technique, and those on the echoes of Scriptures in the Pauline letters are invaluable, this is not what is meant by 'Scriptural Reasoning'. 'Scriptural Reasoning' does not seek to investigate exactly how Paul cites the Scriptures nor whether or not echoes can be heard in his ways of thinking but rather presupposes such references and relations to the Scriptures. It also does not perceive Paul's 'use' of Scripture as serving him to support or prove an argument which has its roots elsewhere. It can rather be seen as an approach which has similarities with Rosner's approach who concentrates in his study not on the 'use' of Scripture in a technical sense but '....in its wider sense to include not only explicit use of Scripture but also what might be called implicit or instinctive use of Scripture.'⁸

Scriptural Reasoning also does not depict the Scriptures and Paul's gospel which he is proclaiming as two separate entities that might punctually be related to each other in Paul's 'use' but, apart from this 'use', basically have nothing to do with each other.

Rather, as Campbell, Nanos, et al, have emphasized, the Scriptures are seen as the symbolic universe within which Paul lives, within which he is rooted in his thought and life before as well as after his call.⁹ Thus he is perceived as living, thinking and acting from within this symbolic universe whilst working out the implications of life in Christ for his gentile communities. The authority of the Scriptures as that which shapes his perception of the world is thus presupposed in this perception of Paul's way of reasoning.

⁸ Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics*, p.17.

⁹ As W.S. Campbell emphasizes "It is the peculiarity of Paul's cultural inheritance that contributed largely to his thought world." 'The Contribution of Traditions to Paul's Theology' in David M. Hay ed. *Pauline Theology Vol II*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1993, p. 253. And M.D. Nanos states that "Paul's.....message and framework of thinking are those of one who considers himself working within the historical expectations of Israel...." *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1996, p. 26.

Having indicated what 'scriptural reasoning' is not, before we go on to describe how we perceive 'scriptural reasoning' as that which informs the dynamics of Paul's theologising, we want to give a brief description of 'Scriptural Reasoning' as a discourse which is emerging in the wake of postmodernity, more precisely in the wake of postcritical theology.

2 What is 'Scriptural Reasoning'?

The term 'Scriptural Reasoning' has come to prominence in postcritical theologies as expressed in the series *Radical Traditions: Theology in a Postcritical Key* edited by Peter Ochs and Stanley Hauweras.¹⁰ What is being proposed is a return to scriptural traditions, 'with the hope of retrieving resources long ignored, depreciated, and in many cases ideologically suppressed by modern habits of thought.'¹¹ It is in the first instance a movement that began as an offshoot of the study of Judaism but parallel to this movement of Jewish thinkers there has now developed a movement that invites Jewish, Christian and Islamic theologians back to the texts of their respective traditions, recovering and rearticulating modes of 'scriptural reasoning'. The movement is driven by questions concerning the place of theology and, more specifically, of scriptural faith in contemporary life. Significantly, the participants of this discourse locate themselves at home both within their respective faith communities as well as in Western universities.

The move towards Scriptures does not imply a naïve return to some 'original' pure text or original truth, but neither is it an uncritical application of so-called 'rational' forms of thinking and reasoning in the Western philosophical tradition. The movement finds significant

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. Steven Kepnes, Peter Ochs and Robert Gibbs, *Reasoning after Revelation: Dialogues in Postmodern Jewish Philosophy*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press 1998, Tikva Frymer-Kensky et.al eds. *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, Boulder, CO: Westview Pres 2000, Peter Ochs and Nancy Levene eds., *Textual Reasonings: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans 2003.

¹¹ 'Radical Traditions', Series description, in *Textual Reasoning*.

affinities between Jewish forms of reading and reasoning and postmodern thought. It challenges the notion of there being just one single discourse of reasoning and rationality, that is, that of Western science and logic, as the valid model for the 'right' way of thinking. As Peter Ochs describes this '....they (scriptural reasoners) criticize the efforts to adopt certain academic disciplines as universal standards of rationality, as if rabbinic (or Christian, or Muslim, or Sanskrit) texts were to be deemed 'rational' only in so far as their claims were reducible to the terms of the latest academic science.' Such efforts are perceived as expressions or tendencies of Western imperialism. Ochs continues 'They presume, instead, that indigenous practices of text-reading represent indigenous practices of reasoning, and that one task of contemporary Jewish thought is to find terms, categories and logics through which such indigenous modes of rationality can be identified and discussed across the borders of different text traditions.'¹² This does not exclude in any way the openness of such scriptural traditions to contemporary practices of reasoning. Scriptural reasoners do not see themselves as foundationalist, they tend to affirm and reform the practices of scriptural traditions as well as modern rationality. It is significant that participants in this discourse describe their activities as a movement. They thereby emphasize the relational and social dimension of what is described here. It is a thinking in relation with others rather than being performed by isolated scholars in their ivory towers. It is a thinking with and around texts in dialogue with other thinkers – what Rosenzweig has called 'speech-thinking' or 'thinking with an 'and'', and which for Buber was labelled dialogic thinking. It is a thinking of a community, a communal act, in relation to the Scriptures, to God and to each other. 'Scriptural reasoning' is a social enterprise. The autonomous modern self is decentred in this enterprise. It is integrated into a specific community and tradition through this dialogic process. As such, rather than being a mere intellectual theory, scriptural reasoning is a form of practising philosophy and theology which, as a communal enterprise, generates new ways of reading and new ways of reasoning. Or more precisely, new-old ways of reading and reasoning since it is a reading of sacred

¹² 'Introduction' in *Textual Reasoning*, p. 5.

texts in and for ever-new contexts, responding to specific contemporary needs and challenges.

Moreover, the particularity in and of this discourse is stressed by several of its 'activists'. As this form of reasoning is related to the particular Scriptures of a particular community at a particular moment in history it is obvious that claims of universal or eternal truths cannot be raised. Scriptural reasoning is a dialogic process between particular people in relation to particular traditions, it implies and allows independent entities to stand in relation with each other without combining or merging them into some third entity.¹³ Dialogue thus does not imply identity or sameness. It presupposes and maintains relationships that persist despite differences, differences being rather honoured than negated.

To emphasize the particularity of the dialogical process called scriptural reasoning does not mean to retreat to an island, or into sectarianism or a ghetto. The return to one's own traditions does not mean to isolate oneself from other traditions. This return is embedded in the context of cultural and religious pluralism. A positive relation to and respect for other worldviews and faiths is part of this dialogical process, not least the scriptures of Judaism.

Scriptural reasoning as described above is inspired and nurtured by classic rabbinic forms of conversation - as conversations around texts in relation to community life before God - and relates such conversations to contemporary academic conversations around texts and questions of philosophy, theology and methods. As conversations around texts, this form of interpretation opened up ways for innovation in preserving continuity with the tradition. In disagreeing with another interlocutor one could still be listening to, and learning from, one another, since all are related to the same text. Differences are not accommodated, the many voices are not assimilated into one and the same, the rabbis were masters of polysemic reading.¹⁴

¹³ Cf. Gibbs in *Reasoning after Revelation*, p. 23.

¹⁴ Cf. *Reasoning after Revelation* "...the rabbinic texts are dialogic. They ask us to take parts, and then they destabilize those parts by jumping from one

David Ford in his 'Response to textual reasoning' emphasizes that there are analogies in Christianity to the rabbinic tradition of conversation. Since these were marginalized in Christian traditions a re-awareness of Jewish textual reasoning encourages a comparable approach to Christian Scripture and tradition, a rediscovery of 'Scriptural Reasoning' in Christian ways of re-engaging with Jewish ways of handling Scripture and tradition as the tradition to which they are so closely related as to share common roots. This might counteract and support the repairing of the damage done by authoritarian, universalizing traditions of Christian interpretation across the centuries.¹⁵

As Ford further emphasizes, the passion for teaching and learning is an aspect of scriptural reasoning that might prove inspiring for a Christian approach since it alerts us to the necessarily open process of interpretation as dialogue. With Ford's comments in mind I want to sketch out what 'scriptural reasoning',¹⁶ as the dynamic which informed Paul's theologising, might involve.

3 Paul's Scriptural Reasoning

a) The Jewish Context of Paul's Reasoning

Paul's reasoning is not only rooted in the Scriptures but is developed in association with, and in the context of, contemporary Jewish

context to another, changing the interlocutors. Even if every opinion is discarded, each one solicits the effort to justify it. You cannot read these texts alone; and when you read them with another person, they encourage you to improvise, to append your own thoughts, and to keep changing perspectives." p. 59, also p. 36.

¹⁵ Ford, "Responding to textual reasoning: What might Christians learn?" in *Textual Reasoning*, p. 263ff.

¹⁶ This is done with the precaution Peter Ochs emphasizes when he writes 'But textual reasoners remain as yet in the early stages of their efforts to discover and explain what kind of reasoning this is, what its premises are, its modes of inference, and its instruments of articulating and testing these inferences.' *Textual Reasoning*, p. 8.

thinking and exegesis. Paul moves within the biblical thought world and uses its idiom and language but he did not receive his Bible in a vacuum. Paul encountered the challenge of Scripture through a Jewish filter. His thinking was directly influenced by the Scriptures but it was also influenced by his familiarity with contemporary Jewish reasoning. As B.Rosner notes 'The significance of many portions of the Pauline paraenesis can only be appreciated by taking full account of Old Testament background *as well as* the conceptual development of Old Testament ideas in early Jewish paraenesis.'¹⁷ This is in fact to state that Paul shares common ground with fellow Jewish exegetes, despite other differences from them. Gone then is the image of Paul, the isolated exegete using the Old Testament for his own gospel purposes in a manner which, whilst emphasizing his rootedness in Scriptures, simultaneously suggests that his gospel hermeneutic radically distances him from all contemporary Judaism. To acknowledge Paul's relation to contemporary Jewish thinking is merely to put Paul in his social context, to recognize the sociality of his reading and reasoning.¹⁸ (Unlike modern Christians Paul could not carry his entire Bible with him on his travels. It was in the synagogue that the full text of Scriptures would be available, read and

¹⁷ *Paul, Scripture and Ethics*, p. 181.

¹⁸ Cf. David Ford, "Responding to textual reasoning: What might Christians learn?" in *Textual Reasonings: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Peter Ochs and Nancy Levene. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2002, pp.259-268, p. 265f.. Cf J.H. Charlesworth on the diversity of Judaism, *Anchor Dictionary of the Bible, Vol 5* , 'Article 'Pseudepigrapha' pp.537-40, " The contradicting ideas should not be explained away or forced into an artificial system. Such ideas in the Pseudepigrapha witness to the fact that early Judaism was not a speculative philosophical movement or theological system, even though the Jews demonstrated impressive speculative fecundity. The Pseudepigrapha mirror a living religion in which the attempt was made to come to terms with the dynamic phenomena of history and experience." p. 538.

discussed.¹⁹) He shared and lived in the symbolic universe, the 'cultural-linguistic system' of first century Judaism.²⁰

In making this emphasis I am directly opposing the argument that Paul based his teaching and ethics on the gospel as opposed to the Scriptures. Rosner has shown from his study of 1 Corinthians 5-7 that the Scriptures are for Paul more than a witness to the gospel but also guide for ethical conduct.²¹

b) The Authority of Scripture for Gentiles in Christ

How Paul relates his mainly Gentile communities to the Scriptures is illuminating. It is not only in Romans and Galatians that Paul grounds his arguments in Scripture, but in his other letters, especially the Corinthian correspondence, his dependence whether explicit or implicit, is easily demonstrable. Surprisingly then, even his Gentile congregations are expected to be rooted in Scripture. He expected them to be familiar with Scripture (e.g. 'do you not know...' Rom 6-7). More significantly Paul takes it for granted that the authority of Scripture extends to his gentile Christ communities and that it should be formative for their identity in Christ. As Stanley perceives it, it is beyond doubt that 'Paul regarded the words of Scripture as having absolute authority for his predominantly Gentile congregations.'²²

¹⁹ This also applies to the congregations as Nanos has demonstrated '...outside the synagogue the early Christians would have had little opportunity to learn the 'Scriptures'; gentiles in particular would have had no previous exposure to the religious life of the people of God and the ways of righteousness associated with Judaism's monotheistic practices.' *Mystery of Romans*, p.73. On the institutional context of reading and reasoning, see David Ford 'Responding', in *Textual Reasoning*, pp. 266-7.

²⁰ I am aware that this paradigm is only partly adequate to describe a religious tradition. It presupposes a static view of culture and religion, taking rules, terms, symbols and narratives as set. It does not account sufficiently for the fact that traditions are living networks which are constantly negotiated in continuous conversations. Cf. *Reasoning after Revelation*, p.26f.

²¹ *Paul, Scripture and Ethics*, p.194.

²² *Paul and the Language of Scripture*, p. 338.

Paul expects gentiles who live in Christ to enter the symbolic universe of the Scriptures.

More to the point however, and even when he differed from his Jewish contemporaries, Paul's reliance on the authority of Scripture is something he shares with, and that is wholly in line with, contemporary Jewish practice.²³ Sameness or uniformity are not ideals of early Jewish interpretation nor of later rabbinic interpretation.²⁴ That Paul and contemporary Jews disagreed over certain issues is not yet reason enough for a parting of the ways but part of their common tradition of Scriptural reasoning.

This implies that in relating the ethical conduct of his Gentile communities to the Scriptures Paul may have come into conflict with Jews who disagreed with this. Since these 'opponents' also defined themselves and their way of life within the horizon of the Scriptures Paul could not avoid dialogue and interaction with them and their perspective on the Scriptures. Thus Paul is not only in dialogue with Peter and Apollos but he cannot operate in isolation from contemporary Jewish exegesis. Essentially what this means is that 'Scriptural Reasoning' for Paul is necessarily a social and communal activity rather than being purely individual and personal. It relates him to other Christ believers, Jews and Gentiles, as well as non-Christ believing Jews as a community which despite its divergence nevertheless centres around the text of the Scriptures.

²³ Cf. Nanos, who sees Paul's discussions about the status and conduct of his gentile congregations as part of the Jewish debates about the relationship of gentiles with Jews. *Mystery*, pp.42ff.

²⁴ Cf. Daniel Patte, 'In other words what is essential is not a correct (orthodox) theological doctrine but an openness to Scripture, a 'listening to Scripture' in the context of actual life. This in fact results in "a multiplicity of the theological conceptions" not necessarily fitting with each other...', *Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine*. SBL Dissertation Series 22, Missoula, Mon: Scholars Press 1975, p.75.

c) The three Dimensions of Paul's Scriptural Reasoning

Most scholars would agree that a central emphasis in Paul is the Christ event, as interpreted in the earliest 'Christian' tradition, which should clearly be our starting point in seeking to formulate the apostle's pattern of thinking. This does not imply regarding the Scriptures and the Christ-event as two separate entities more or less closely related, nor seeing the one as overcome or abrogated by the other. The early Christ tradition sought to understand this climactic event from the Scriptures in the light of their current understanding. Apart from the Scriptures the Christ-event would certainly not have been self-explanatory nor would it have served as a launching point for what was eventually to emerge as a radical new movement.

For Paul and his contemporaries in the Christ movement, the Christ-event was not just perceived as a significant event in the past but viewed rather as a past event with ongoing effects as demonstrated in the proclamation of the gospel. The gospel as the Christ-event at work in the world was again understood and interpreted through the perceived interaction between Scripture and contemporary events, these being considered as mutually illuminating each other.

Thus the Christ-event, the Scriptures and the interaction between these two and the ongoing life of the Christ believing communities in their social and political context are the three main dimensions that determine Paul's *process* of scriptural reasoning. It is in the dynamic interplay between these that Paul is able to work out the will of God for his gentile communities in the differing exigencies of daily life.

Such an understanding of the dynamic that informed Paul's thought maintains for him and his communities the ongoing significance of the Christ-event not as something perceived in its pastness but rather as a present power at work in the world. It is the Scriptures that provide the framework with which to explain and evaluate what is happening in the process of proclaiming the gospel in the world. The Christ communities view themselves as created and called by God through Christ in accordance with the Scriptures. These in turn guide the communities in the face of adverse political and social events to an adequate self-understanding, thus establishing both their confidence and identity as God's people. Neither the Christ-event nor the

Scriptures themselves are perceived as completed entities in the past but as living realities in the present. It is in this sense that these communities might be said to live in Scripture and that correspondingly Scripture lives within them. (Likewise the communities live in Christ and Christ also lives in them.)

d) The Scriptures as Formative of Identity

This in fact implies that both Paul as well his communities live in the particularity of the biblical symbolic universe. Of course it may be legitimately argued that Hellenistic Judaism was itself strongly influenced by Hellenistic culture and thinking. Doubtless Paul inherited much mediated to him from this source. However, this does not mean that Paul was simply 'a Hellenistic confluence of ideas' as Engberg-Pedersen recently suggested.²⁵ Hellenistic influence on Paul and his reasoning needs to be acknowledged but this does not mean either that it dominated his thought or that it meant for Paul a confused identity.²⁶ As Niebuhr has demonstrated, early Hellenistic Jewish paraenesis was shaped largely by the Torah despite the influence of Greek thinking.²⁷ This implies taking seriously the fact that the symbolic universe of Paul was Jewish, that is, the God who had called him was the God of the prophets, not of the 'actus purus' or the 'ousia' of Greek philosophy. Paul was embedded in one particular tradition, but to be embedded does not mean to be enclosed.

²⁵ Cf. *Paul in his Hellenistic Context*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1994, p. xviii. Cf also *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*. Troels Engberg-Pedersen ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 2001.

²⁶ Cf. My Review Article "Dual Identity – a Real Possibility" in *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 21/1 April 2000, pp. 121-25.

²⁷ Cf. *Gesetz und Paraenese: Katechismusartige Weisungsreihen in der frühjüdischen Literatur*. Tübingen: Mohr 1987, pp.45f. On this see also my book: *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged: Feminism and the New Perspective in Pauline Studies*, London, New York: T&T Clark International 2004, pp.57-9.

This Jewish tradition was part of the Hellenistic world but it had its own distinct perception of the world, its own beliefs and its own way of thinking strengthened by strong oral as well as written traditions. In his deconstruction of Western logocentrism and its claim to universal truth, Derrida challenges the notion of there being only one way of thinking as has been held to be the case throughout centuries. This tradition of thinking has also dominated biblical interpretation. In fact, it still does since it is the discourse we have learnt to think in from childhood. We cannot escape it completely but must seek to become aware of another reading from a different angle. In Caputo's reading of Derrida, what is necessary is a 'dehellenizing of biblical faith' – given that 'the prophets never heard of the science that investigates 'to on he on'.²⁸

What we are maintaining here is that whatever Hellenistic influences operated in Paul's education and upbringing in this milieu, it was the Torah and its tradition of interpretation that dominated his thought and provided him with a particular and distinct identity embedded in the biblical world though not totally enclosed against other influences.²⁹

Part of Paul's goal for his mainly gentile communities was to ground them in the heritage of Abraham not as Jews but as legitimate gentile heirs of the promises. This in fact means to ground them in the biblical symbolic universe as those called by God from among the nations. For gentiles in Christ the Scriptures therefore become a new 'identity marker', signifying their entry into a new symbolic universe.³⁰

At this point I will draw together the various aspects of Paul's scriptural reasoning before turning briefly to two specific examples. Paul does not cite Scripture merely as proof texts in support of

²⁸ *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press 1997, p.5.

²⁹ Cf. *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged*, chapter 4, pp.142-54.

³⁰ This is the reason why scholars claim that gentiles in Christ are Israel, but this is to overlook the fact that they still remain *gentiles* in Christ. Cf. *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged*, p. 151f.

arguments arrived at from elsewhere. Nor does he cite Scripture in a wooden manner merely repeating its original content in a new context.³¹ To speak of his ‘use of the Old Testament in the New’ also is not entirely satisfactory. Paul does more than simply ‘use’ Scripture. As we have argued, he lives in the world of Scripture, in a biblical symbolic universe which emerges in his writings in a thinking that is more responsive and associative than originaive and discursive.

c) Romans 9:24 f

The first example we will consider is Rom 9:24ff. This demonstrates with a string of scriptural citations the mercy of God on those whom he has called not from the Jews only but also from the gentiles. Paul begins by citing Hosea 2:25 ‘Καλέσω τὸν οὐ λαόν μου λαόν μου καὶ τὴν οὐκ ἠγαπημένην ἠγαπημένην.’ Because this citation seems designed to support an argument for the inclusion of gentiles as well as Jews, scholars have claimed that Paul now applies Scriptures that originally referred to Israel to believing gentiles. The ‘not my people’ are seen as the gentiles and Paul thus seems to adjust scriptural meanings to suit his own purposes. Dodd voices the sentiments of many commentators when he states ‘It is rather strange that Paul has not observed that this prophecy referred to Israel, rejected for its sins, but destined to be restored – strange because it would have fitted so admirably the doctrine of the restoration of Israel which he is to expound in ch. 11.’³² However, this citation is not what it might seem to be. It can be shown that the primary concern in this chapter (Rom 9) is with the historic people of God and their apparent lack of faith in Christ (rather than the inclusion of gentiles which at this point is brought in more as an aside). The inclusion of Gentiles has already been established in Rom 3-4 (and of course in Paul’s earlier letter to the Galatians).

³¹ Cf. Shiu-Lun Shum, *Paul’s Use of Isaiah in Romans*. Tübingen: Mohr 2002, p. 259.

³² *Romans*, 1932, p.160.

When we consider the context more carefully we note that this citation is followed by two others which clearly can refer only to Israel. It seems strange that Paul would include a rather arbitrary reference to gentiles in such a grouping. A better explanation of Paul's pattern of citation is that all three citations retain their primary reference to Israel and that the first citation referring to the 'not my people', whilst retaining its reference to Israel, can also by analogy be extended to include gentiles who in a more distinct sense are 'not my people'. Such an emphasis is much more in keeping with the original Hosea context where the mercy of God is a dominant theme. It would seem strange if in fact in a passage where the prophet refers to God's merciful dealings with Israel but then in Paul's version of the same passage Israel is simply left under judgment and the 'not people' – the gentiles – take her place. This is all the more surprising since Paul's theme at this point in Rom 9 is demonstrated to be divine compassion. In Rom 9:15 Paul sets up a scriptural text to serve as it were as a major heading for the next section of his argument Ελεήσω ὃν ἄν ἔλεω καὶ οἰκτιρήσω ὃν ἄν οἰκτίρω. This is followed by other scriptural citations but the pattern of scriptural reasoning Paul uses here is one in which major scriptural citations dominate later scriptural citations which are subsidiary to the main heading. Thus subsidiary citations do not nullify the major thesis previously stated but stand under and serve to clarify the primary purpose of emphasizing divine mercy.

The reading we are following here follows partly from a proposal by Karl Barth who asks "To whom did these words originally apply? To the Israel of the kings of Samaria, which had been rejected by God and which had yet been granted such a promise. And because these words have now been fulfilled in the calling of the gentiles to the church of Jesus Christ, they obviously also speak with renewed force in their original sense; they also speak of the rejected, disobedient Israel. Now that he has fulfilled it superabundantly among the rejected without, how could God's promise not apply also to the rejected within, to whom he had once addressed it?"³³ Interestingly, Barth sees this text as referring to both Israel under judgement and also to gentile

³³ A Shorter Commentary on Romans, (London: SCM 1959) 122-3.

believers.

Most likely therefore Paul does not primarily use the Hosea citation to refer to gentiles. The primary reference is still to Israel. What Paul is claiming is that rejected Israel like the northern tribes in Hosea will be restored, and along with them another 'non people', the gentiles will also be blessed. In this reading Paul does apply the Hosea citation in a secondary sense typologically to gentiles also but only after it has served his primary purpose to argue for the restoration of Israel.³⁴

In this passage we have seen Paul at work in his scriptural world. He moves within innumerable citations to illuminate and develop his argument step by step with major and minor scriptural premises; but he uses these creatively not in opposition to their original content and context but primarily to refer to Israel and only then by extension to gentiles. At this point in particular, because he dialogues so intensely with Scripture, a comparison could be drawn between Paul's nuanced use of his Jewish scriptural heritage and the activity of jazz musicians. As Brown describes this, multiple rhythms are played simultaneously and in dialogue with each other – each member of the group has to listen to the other so as to respond and at the same time concentrate on his/her own improvisation.³⁵ In parallel to this we might maintain that Paul plays with the multiple rhythms of Scripture with some improvisation and ingenuity.³⁶

³⁴ Cf. W.S. Campbell, 'Divergent Images of Paul and his Mission', in *Reading Israel in Romans: Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations* .Ed. Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International 2000, pp. 187- 211, pp. 198ff.

³⁵ Elsa B. Brown, 'What Has Happened Here', in Linda Nicholson ed., *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory* New York, London: Routledge 1997. p.275.

³⁶ Cf. Also Ford, 'Responding' in *Textual Reasoning*, p. 259.

f) Galatians 3:28

The question in debate concerning this piece of early Christ tradition in Galatians has two aspects which are discussed most prominently – is it an indication that the order of creation is overcome in Christ – and if so does Paul manipulate such a supposed ‘original’ meaning of this Christ tradition to suit his purpose?³⁷

The perception of Gal 3: 28 as the description of a new order in Christ which overcomes and replaces differences in creation as told in the creation narratives of the Scriptures actually sets ‘to be in Christ’ and the Scriptures in opposition to each other. It shapes the relation of scriptural tradition and Christ tradition as a dichotomy, as mutually exclusive.

Given that Gal 3:28 is, as Schüssler Fiorenza and other scholars perceive, a baptismal formula, and as such a sort of charter of the early Christ movement as an egalitarian movement of equals where all differences have become obsolete, some credit has to be given to such an interpretation.³⁸ We then actually would need to ask whether Paul re-introduced hierarchies and differences into this early egalitarian movement.³⁹

But the interpretation of Gal 3:28 as a fixed early Christ tradition expressing the generally egalitarian character of the early Christ movement is debatable. There is not room here to discuss this in detail in this paper, but this interpretation seems to reconstruct ‘Christian’ origins with too many presuppositions from outside the letter. Troy W. Martin has recently argued for a situational interpretation of Gal 3:28. He perceives the baptismal-formula explanation not as entirely satisfactory since it does not leave room for the flexibility we find in

³⁷ Cf. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 208-11, also pp.235ff.

³⁸ J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday 1997.

³⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1999, p. 166f.

other contexts where similar pairs are mentioned, especially when compared with 1 Cor 12:13.⁴⁰ Moreover, it does not explain adequately the mentioning of the second two pairs of slave-free and male-female since in most interpretations these are not seen to be related to the situation in Galatia as the Jew-Greek pair obviously is. Since Paul adapted the formula in 1 Cor 12: 13 to fit the situation of the Corinthian community, Troy concludes that there must be reasons for mentioning the three pairs in Galatians.

Rather than taking the word pair male-female as resonating with Gen 1:27 Martin 'hears' this pair as well as the slave-free pair as resonating with Gen 17: 9-14, the covenant of circumcision. From this, he concludes, Paul is referring not to an abolition of the created order - creation is not the scope of his argumentation - but rather the distinction between the Christ believing communities and the 'covenant of circumcision'.⁴¹ Whilst the distinction between Jew and Greek, slave and free, and male and female are relevant for membership in the covenant of circumcision, they are not entry requirements for being 'in Christ'.⁴² This, however, does not imply that these distinctions are abolished or obsolete in Christ. To be one in

⁴⁰ Cf. his article 'The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14) and the Situational Antithesis in Galatians 3:28' in *JBL* 122/1 (2003), pp.111-125, pp.114f.

⁴¹ As Martin stresses, „..Paul's concern is in not overturning the original order of creation but contextualizing the covenant of circumcision. In his argument, Gal 3:28c announces not an abolition of the male/female antithesis but its irrelevance for determining the candidates for Christian baptism and membership in the Christian community." 'The Covenant of Circumcision' p.119

⁴² I find Martin's argument quite convincing but do not agree with him in his perception of circumcision as the reason for the inferior status of women in Judaism. Such an inferior status cannot be generally presupposed (cf. e.g. Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women into Second Temple Judaism* Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson 2001; Bernadette Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*, Chico: California 1982). That it existed is beyond doubt but this has to be seen in the context of the patriarchal structures of Mediterranean societies in Antiquity generally not due to any Jewish commandment.

Christ does not presuppose sameness. But such distinctions should not serve as a legitimation for inequality and domination.⁴³ That diversity is presupposed by Paul, is indicated by his image of the one body of Christ as composed of many members (1Cor 12:12-14 and Rom 12:4ff). Significantly Martin's reading does not create an opposition between the 'covenant of circumcision' and being 'in Christ' nor does it separate them, it just distinguishes the two entities.

Paul, in addressing the specific situation in the communities in Galatia in his response, relates early Christ tradition, the Scriptures and the actual context in a creative and associative way which we have found to be typical of 'scriptural reasoning'. I cannot elaborate on this here in any more detail, but what is indicated by this is that there is some consistency and coherence in Paul's form of reasoning and also that we should hesitate to be unduly critical of Paul's use of scripture before we have considered all the options available to him.

4 Conclusion

In contextualizing Paul in the symbolic universe of the Scriptures and of contemporary Jewish exegesis we propose to perceive him as living, thinking and acting from within this 'cultural-linguistic' system with its own specific forms of reasoning. These forms are perceived as comparable to 'Scriptural Reasoning', a practice of dialogic thinking around a text which is not opposed to, but distinguished from, Western philosophical logic.

We have found that Paul's scriptural reasoning is a vivid process of dialogic interaction between the Scriptures, the Christ-event and the actual life of the communities in and through which Paul in his letters is working out what the gospel implies in the particular situations of his mainly gentile communities. The analysis of Rom 9: 24ff has demonstrated that in taking the scriptural context of Paul's reasoning seriously into account we find him creatively associating scriptural premises with the contemporary issue of Israel's apparent unbelief. Considering this, the whole section is seen in the light of the theme

⁴³ Cf. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethics*, p.158f.

mentioned in v. 15, that is, the mercy of God. Paul then is seen as not suddenly changing subject and turning to the gentiles after having dealt with Israel at the beginning of the chapter, but as coherently working out the unforeseeable mercy of God for his people as well as for the nations. Also in the Galatians passage, we have found that in following Paul's scriptural reasoning, we did not find him reversing the created order nor simply opposing circumcision, but as Martin has shown, he is coherently working out the distinction between the covenant of circumcision, that is Israel, and the communities of those in Christ, without creating binary oppositions or a breach between creation and new creation or Israel and those in Christ. To perceive Paul not as a more or less coherent thinker of Western logic and its dualisms but as one who is creatively playing with the multiple rhythms of Scripture related to life in the light of the Christ-event could prove significant for an understanding of Christian identity beyond the restrictions of dualistic thinking.

5 Appendix – Some Further Thoughts on the Future of Scriptural Reasoning

The rediscovery of “reason as inescapably tradition constituted” offers exciting new options for genuine dialogue between scriptural interpreters and contemporary intellectual thinkers/practitioners of any faith or none. By ‘a return to the text’, to scriptural traditions, there is now the hope of retrieving resources long ignored, deprecated, and in many cases ideologically suppressed by modern habits of thought. The new emphasis upon traditions also offers fresh opportunity to stress how these traditions are embedded in the practices of believing communities, offering also a new understanding of the close relation between belief and practice, an insight crucial to understanding Paul's theologising. Thus Paul's ethical statements are of fundamental importance and it is in these that we get significant insights into his pattern of ‘scriptural reasoning’.

This new, confident emphasis upon scriptures and the search for new paradigms of reason in a type of reasoning that is more responsive than originaive means also a new relationship between the disciplines of academic studies and scriptural interpreters in which there is genuine partnership and dialogue. The interpretation of Paul should benefit enormously from this. Very frequently, the application to his

letters of a Western conceptualized logic has led to him being regarded as hopelessly contradictory or as not making any proper sense. This oppositional type of thinking challenged Paul's inclusive statements such as "to the Jew first and also to the gentile", preferring an either /or choice which inevitably dismissed or denigrated emphases which were seen as specifically of Jewish (and therefore of tribal) origin. Again the universalising of Paul's statements in particular letters, led to similar criticisms of his thinking.

A real possibility of listening afresh to Paul's scriptural reasoning is now feasible, using philosophical and other academic disciplines as genuine servants and tools of understanding, rather than as dominant ideologies that hinder Paul's thinking being properly heard or understood. But this also means a broader conception of biblical scholarship in which biblical interpreters genuinely engage with contemporary thinkers and patterns of thought wherever these may impinge upon the process of scriptural understanding. If we are to demand that academics in other disciplines take proper account of our scriptural traditions, we must likewise be open also to taking account of their intellectual traditions and modes of thought. Only in such a dialogue can scriptural interpreters be freed from the tendency to arrogance based on an unexplained biblical authority, and 'non-theological' academics be freed from the arrogance of ignoring or devaluing those traditions that gave rise to their academic foundations of knowledge. What is most exciting both for the understanding of Paul's scriptural reasoning and for the contemporary application of it in a postcritical world is that now there is at last some genuine recognition of the link between theological thinking and the practice of faith in everyday life.

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Paul and the Salvation of the Individual by Gary W Burnett (Brill, Leiden, 2001) ISBN 90 04 122974, pp.246, hardback, €88.00

The thesis of this volume is that in recent New Testament scholarship on Paul, more emphasis has been laid on the covenantal, collective aspects of his thought to the corresponding detriment of the emphasis on the salvation of the individual (p.105).

Due to the innovative work of Stendahl, Sanders and Dunn a stronger emphasis on the relation of peoples i.e. of Jew and gentile to God in the Gospel has emerged. Dr Burnett is not seeking to undermine this emphasis entirely but he intends rather to offer a corrective, to restore what he sees as a more balanced interpretation (p.114).

The purpose of his study aims, by examining several texts in Paul's Letter to the Romans, to investigate whether "Paul was concerned with the individual qua individual, irrespective of social or, indeed, historical identity"(p.10). If the social scientists are correct in their depiction of the ancient world as one in which a sense of the self was completely or largely embedded in the family or kinship group, then this has strong implications for the way in which we read Pauline texts. Burnett notes that scholars such as Witherington (*The Paul Quest*) and Elliott (*The Rhetoric of Romans*) and many others have been influenced by this emphasis on the corporate and been critical of an individualistic understanding of Paul.

The texts chosen for investigation on the relation of the individual and the corporate are Romans 1:16-17, 3:21-28 and 7:7-25. Burnett offers a careful and concise overview of current interpretation of these sections of Romans, taking into account to a somewhat lesser extent their overall place and function within the structure and purpose of the letter. The selection of these passages cannot be faulted since they are central to the discussion in hand. However, we should be aware that other texts in Romans, particularly from 9-11 or 14-15 could have been included and these might have slanted the findings in another direction. It is difficult to deal with a long letter such as Romans in its entirety, but I am very wary of viewing the part as if it were the totality, especially since the dominant tendency in the history of Romans interpretation was, until relatively recently, to ignore chapters 9-11.

The debate over the interpretation of the 'I' in Romans 7 is longstanding and diverse. Obviously it is basic to the concern for the individual whether Paul himself in whatever period of his life is intended in this reference. Burnett offers a good discussion of the options and comes to the conclusion that the "reading of the passage, which relates the 'I' primarily to Paul himself and his immediate readers, once again highlights the personal, as opposed to the collective aspects of Paul's argument in Romans"(p.213). It is interesting how 'personal' interchanges with 'individual' in the discussion-possibly personal would be the better term to use since it allows more easily for participation in the corporate. Although Burnett's reading is possible, even plausible, I find that several factors leave me unconvinced. This section of the letter as in other sections also, is in diatribe style. This means that the 'I' need not necessarily be taken as individual especially if we compare with 11:19 where 'ego' reappears in the speech of the gentile branches, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in". Here there can be no question but that the 'ego' is corporate.

Secondly, Burnett claims that in Romans 7:17-25, "in a passage where Paul is seeking to complete his criticism of the law, he does so by reference to the negative personal experience of both himself and his readers"(p.213). This implies for both Paul and his addressees "pre-Christian experience of the law" whether as Jews or God-fearers (p.201). However, there is now a consensus that there are no Judaizers in Rome (as Burnett acknowledges) but a number of scholars stress the gentile majority in the households at Rome. It is too much to claim that all of these gentiles had prior involvement with Judaism, and if this is granted, then the assumption that Paul can assume pre-Christian experience of the law is not feasible.

Thirdly, a study by Sylvia Keesmaat on Romans 1-4, *Paul and his Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition* (Sheffield 1999) argues convincingly, to me at least, from scriptural echoes in Romans 8 that implicit here are the wilderness wanderings of the people of Israel. Thus it is not only at the end of chapter 8 that Paul turns to consider his own people- these have been in mind even since the beginning of Romans 7. Such a reading obviously gives support for a corporate rather than an individual reading even of Romans 7:7-25, since it is

generally recognized that this section should be read in concert with chapter 8 as two mutually illuminating discourses.

Burnett has set himself a tough task and has produced good arguments in favour of giving more place to the individual in Pauline interpretation. His work is well researched and very well written. Whether it is perceived as a necessary corrective to over-reaction against earlier individualistic interpretation depends obviously on the stance of the reader. One query I have concerning the envisaged overview of scholarly endeavours is the failure to give more place to Rudolf Bultmann and his existentialist individualism. He is cited in the footnotes, but his contribution to New Testament scholarship is not evaluated adequately. Ernst Käsemann, a pupil of Bultmann, spent a great deal of his teaching opposing the existential, anti-cosmological interpretation of his teacher, who underemphasized Romans 9-11 in favour of 1-8. This was because Romans 9-11 not only offered little support but instead offered positive opposition to existentialist theology. Much of my criticism of individualism originated via Käsemann in reaction to Bultmann, and I suspect such is the case for many contemporary scholars. But this need not imply opposition to personal faith and commitment. Most of us have benefited from Stendahl and Sanders' contributions to Pauline interpretation, yet in my own case I had completed my doctoral research on Romans in 1972, when most of this new research was entirely unknown.

It is true that many scholars follow a covenantal reading of Paul. But we should note that this derives more from Calvin than Sanders. Sanders actually depicts an outline of covenantal nomism which scholars can easily discover from Paul's letters, but he himself surprisingly distances Paul from this; for Sanders' Paul, participation in Christ is more significant. It seems that the reaction in the last twenty years or so against an existentialist interpretation of Paul has been perceived, wrongly in my opinion, as a reaction against personal faith and commitment, as if this could be ignored in face of wider discussions of Jew and gentile in the purpose of God. Those of us who were horrified at the anti-Jewish bias that frequently accompanied existentialist readings even in Käsemann's work, do not see this (existentialist) approach as the sole guardian of the truth of the Gospel. To acknowledge indebtedness to one's believing predecessors in the faith is wiser than a scepticism concerning history generally

and 'salvific linearity prior to Christ' in particular, as in the work of JL Martyn (noted on p.161n.36).

The significance of covenantal theology, which has been so basic in Scotland and Ireland since the Reformation is that it recognizes that the upbringing of a child in a Christian home is the greatest possible means of evangelism and of expanding the people of God. To stress the need for individual faith and commitment is not in contradiction to this since in Calvin's theology baptism also required the (later) response of the baptized infant to the faith to which the parents and the church had already committed them.

This means of course that though one may disagree with parts of Burnett's research, it does not mean that one cannot support the aim of his scholarly research or affirm much of what he proposes. The divergence of opinion stems from one's assessment of the history of New Testament interpretation since the Second World War. Apart from Bultmann, and more recently Martyn, Moo and to a lesser extent Fitzmyer, there has not been strong emphasis in Romans on the individual, though there was little opposition to individual faith and commitment as such. In my opinion the balanced interpretation of Romans which with Burnett we are all seeking, is one that sees the letter as having two emphases, "it was to prove at the present time that He himself is righteous and that He justifies him who has faith in Jesus" (3:26). The second part of this verse depends on the foundation of the first part, "that He himself is righteous" but the latter can only be affirmed from the action of God in history prior to and in the coming of Christ. In chapter 4 of the recent book by Doug Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals*, there is a useful discussion of the individual and the corporate, critiquing particularly some of the proposals of NT Wright. This could make good reading alongside Burnett's interesting study, and continue the process of cross-fertilization within the diverse perspectives now current in Pauline Studies.

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